

Anarchist Individualism and Amorous Comradeship

Émile Armand

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Translator's note

Anarchy is a methodology and a means of individuation as well as an organizational strategy. Free association, autonomy — Emile Armand knew there was, between society and the individual, a veil of mystifying ideology that had to be torn.

So many anarchists today fear interacting with the world outside their circles; but they forget how many natural anarchists there are in the world, people opposed to profit and power without labeling themselves anything at all. Reading Emile Armand today is like peering at the present through lenses of the past that clarify everything suddenly, in flashes, a past with the same alienations, the same struggles, the same hang-ups.

The concern of some modern anarchists for concepts such as 'race', 'class' and 'gender', concepts with no material reality except as social constructs, 'conventions and prejudices' which torture and distort the vision and should be destroyed in daily life, is the typical result of a sexual repression that also forbids discussing sexual issues in many modern literary anarchist circles.

The sexually repressed person categorizes themselves and other people, because s/he can't directly experience the vast intricacies of anyone for fear of their involvement taking on a sexual dimension, and must erect walls of armoring, like clothing, but extended analogically to the character itself, protecting the individual from emotion. All authentic interaction has, implicitly, a sexual aspect, and if it is liberated, expresses not an obsession with that sexual side of things but a conscious acknowledgment and self-management of it.

When the lights are out, race, class, and gender have no more meaning; only individual feelings and sensual enjoyments are meaningful in the anarchy of truly free emotional association. Sexuality is a primary force in life, and our social relations come from that same place. The repression of that force creates an inversion in the mind and body which is fertile soil for the planting of authoritarian ideology; this is something Armand saw clearly so many years ago, as did individuals in so many other "forgotten" strains of the vast treasure trove of individualist and anarchist thought that has been expressed over the centuries.

Like other individuals, such as Wilhelm Reich, Han Ryner, or Thomas De Coster, Emile Armand knew well the insularity we see around us in radical circles as well as in society at large, and he knew the rigidity accompanying it; he saw it as an expression of a communist pollution in anarchy. Communism was always just a thin façade hiding a brutally 'scientific' authoritarianism, and Armand's distaste for it was plain.

Most of Armand's life was spent directly living it, but his writing was mostly polemical. His position was his own, and he seems to have struggled to make his voice heard in the bustling anarchist milieu of his time, as well as in society at large. He was a nudist and a polyamorist, taking to their logical conclusion, in daily life, the arguments of the anarchists, and living his own life in his own way.

A thorough rereading of Armand today is a healthy alternative to the dry ideologies — always infinitely less messy than the realities — that come in and out of fashion, and an invigorating look into the life of a man who tried his best to be himself and be happy, in the midst of all the misery and role-playing.

— J.

Prologue

Emile Armand was born in Paris in 1872. The son of a progressive bourgeois family, he received a profoundly anticlerical education, which, almost with symmetry, generated within him a great mystico-religious passion. His father fought in the Paris commune, and the family had to emigrate to London in exile. Upon his return numerous things happened to Armand — he first became a born-again Christian, then he abandoned Christianity, having begun to read anarchist books, and then he got tired of his wife.

Emile Armand's rebellion was prolix and massive. It revealed itself in the way a photograph does, the colors appearing without warning from within a gray, virginal, bloodless life. First he rebelled against his own name, Ernest Lucien Juin — against a family institution. Then against his catholic creed, against moral obligation. Then he rebelled against his wife, against social condemnation. And then, later, against Power in general, which is a weakness common to all people and which is the seed of misery. Then he created his own name, Emile Armand, as voluptuous as was the kindness of the ideas he began to profess: amorous camaraderie, a combination of sensuality and freedom, of love and respect. And he assumed a new identity, which was paradoxically generous — anarchist individualism.

If hypocrisy is the mother of the mediocre human and avidity is its father, Armand desired instead the creation of an precocious generation of free children, happy egoists, innocent humans who would know how to detect, with their bodily feelings, the irrational meanness of Power wherever it might come close to generating in people a complicit attitude towards itself. Armand was not alone; he had the friendly companionship of Max Stirner and Han Ryder, recognized individualists who did not call themselves such either, and who had already walked a path which became an inspiration for the French thinker.

Emile Armand was a whole man — essayist, poet, journalist, editor, and translator. He steered away from novels, alexandrine verse, and the genres and spirits that claim that beauty is only to be found in strict compliance to formal rules. At moments, his writing becomes sticky, somewhat repulsive, sentimental — but this all corresponds to what is to be expected of a man who could not, nor wanted to distance himself from his passions. He had already done so too much in his past — for him it was time to narrow himself. The titles of some of his publications reflect this — *The Averse*, *Outside the Flock*, *Beyond fighting*, *The Unique*.

The current prejudice declares individualism to be a synonym for obfuscation, skepticism, melancholy and repulsion; that if individualism were an animal, it would be a pesky fox — that if it were a season, it would be winter, and if it were a habitation it would be a basement. It also declares that individualist sensibility is in reality a closing ceremony for the senses, for feelings, the egotistical enclosure of an "I" which considers itself to be the center of the world. There's no reason to deny it: for anarchist individualists it is sure that each is the center of his or her own world. There is no One Earth, besides in a physical sense in which it is conceived as having certain cosmic coordinates. The negation of this unambiguous condition is characteristic of the individual who, predicating a merely discursive philanthropy, practices with violence a disrespectful centrality. This is what Armand observed — To be unique is not to be the only one, and to be amongst others is not simply to be just anyone. The problem is that the flock of (altruists) has curiously misinterpreted the (central question).

The Individualism of Emile Armand responds with a smile to traditional prejudices, one of which is the traditional views on sexuality. His is an individualism of happiness; and happiness is

the closest sister of eroticism. Thus, it would be an exaggeration to consider Armand as a prophet of sexual freedom. Certainly, he practiced and spoke of it, but his was a call sent out only to a few, to the soul brothers and soul sisters that could understand the throbbing of freedom in all its rich forms. "The individualist is generally a very sensible person, a thinker, a meditator, an aficionado of social observation and personal analysis", according to Georges Palante in his *Individualist Sensibility*.

As Sainte-Beuve once said, "if all of us put ourselves for one minute to the task of saying what we really thought, this society would crumble." And Armand wanted to destroy the moral and sexual prejudices of his epoch to create a new era. History tells us that no destruction tends to be very widely welcomed, and his was no exception, but it is worth the time to rescue from the dustbin of history the valor of this man, who, like so many others, put his body and ideas outside of his times.

A Picture of the Situation

The Social Ambiance

A chaos of beings, acts and ideas; a disorderly struggle, rough, bitter, and without any center, a perpetual lie; a continual succession of events that occur blindly, raising some up today only to crush them pitilessly tomorrow.

An informal and anonymous mass, rich and poor, slaves of secular and hereditary prejudice — some because they draw advantage from those prejudices, and others still because they are submerged in the most crass ignorance and lack the will to escape. A money-worshipping mass, that has for its supreme ideal the rich man; a people made brutish by prejudices, by authoritarian teaching-methods, by an artificial existence, by alcohol-abuse, by adulterated and cheaply produced foods, a plague of degenerates from above and below, without any profound aspirations, with no other goal besides “making it” or living tranquilly.

That which is only provisional constantly threatens to become definitive, while the definite never stops threatening to become more than just provisional. Lives which do injustice to the convictions held by those who live them; convictions which serve as springboards for dishonest ambitions. Freethinkers that end up more clerical than the priests themselves, devotees that reveal themselves to be nothing but vulgar materialists. Superficialities that pass for profundities, profundities that don’t get taken seriously.

This is the living picture of our society, and it is still quite inferior to reality. Why? Because from each face a mask leaps forth, because no one worries about being and everyone worries about appearing. Appearances! Seeming! Yes, this is the supreme ideal of this society, and if anyone so avidly desires well-being and wealth, it is only in order to have the possibility of appearing to possess such things. Because, as we fly along with time, money is the one thing that holds us down.

Racing up the Ladder of Appearances.

This mania, this passion, this race after appearances and after what improves them devours the rich as well as the vagabond, the cultured as well as the illiterate. Workers that resent the boss, while they dream of becoming bosses themselves; businessmen who make such a fuss about their commercial “honor” but don’t stop themselves from participating in dishonorable business; whether small merchant or corporate capitalist, member of however many patriotic and nationalist committees, he goes as fast as he can to employ foreign labor because it’s cheaper and he can increase his profit; the socialist “representative”, lawful defender of the poor proletarian whose numbers pile up in the dirtiest parts of the city, himself resides in a privileged part of town, in the lordly neighborhoods where air is abundant and pure; the revolutionary, who denounces the state’s persecutions and puts forth great effort to move sensible hearts to action while the bour-

geoisie — rudder of the ship of state — persecutes him without respite, puts him in jail, denies him the freedom to speak and write; once this revolutionary has acquired power, he becomes even more domineering, even more intolerant and cruel than those he replaced. The freethinker marries in the church and almost always has his children baptized. Only when the government tolerates it does the religious man dare to express his ideas, and he keeps quiet where religion is made to look as ridiculous as it really is.

Where can we find sincerity, then? On all sides and everywhere the gangrene spreads. It is in the heart of the family, where quite often father, mother, and children hate each other and deceive each other even while they say they love one another. We see it in marriage, where husband and wife, not really listening to each other, are unfaithful to one another but do not break the bond that enchains them, or, at least, lack the courage to speak frankly. Sincerity shows itself in every grouping where one graces his neighbor with the same esteem as the group's members would generally show to the president, secretary, or treasurer of the group, when they're trying to get some promotion, or while they're waiting to take over their post when they reach their term limit. It is often lacking in the various acts of self-abnegation we see in the world — in illustrious acts, in private conversations, in official declarations.

Appearances, appearances, appearances! Pure, disinterested, and generous semblances — when purity, disinterest and generosity are no more than vain lies — to appear honest, moral, virtuous — when integrity, virtue and morality are the least of the professions they profess.

Where can we find someone who has escaped this contagion?

The complexity of the human problem.

It will be objected that we are treating the problem from a metaphysical point of view, that it is necessary to come down to the solid earth of reality, and that this reality is the only one: that our present society is the result of a long historical process whose beginnings are perhaps not so far in the past; that humanity or the various humanities are seeking out their path, but occasionally mistake it, find it again, go forward and take steps backwards. That certain crises shake its very foundations, that they are dragged along, thrown upon the road of destiny only in order to later give up the march, or, on the contrary, to mark the rhythm. That, scratching a little bit at the fool's gold, the varnish, the general idea, the surface of contemporary civilizations, the babblings, infantilisms, and superstitions of prehistorical or pre-prehistorical civilizations, could be laid bare.

From a purely objective standpoint we will be told that “actual” society embraces all beings, all aspirations, all activities, and all pains and sufferings as well. That it is comprised of producers and greedy people, of the disinherited and the privileged, the healthy and the sick, the sober and the drunken, the believers and the incredulous, the worst reactionaries and the followers of the most unlikely doctrines. Society evolves; it modifies itself, transforms itself. It carries within it the seeds of dissolution and rebirth — at certain times it destroys itself and at other times it regenerates itself. Here it is chaotic, there it is ordered, and somewhere else it is ordered and chaotic at the same time. It glorifies abnegation, but it extols interest. It is in favor of peace, but it suffers war. It is against disorder, but accepts revolutions. It holds to the known facts, but acquires new knowledge without end. It hates everything that disturbs its tranquility, but it follows astutely those of its children who know to dispel their lack of confidence, or awaken

its curiosity with promises of a different kind, or calm their fear with the attraction of a mirage. It declaims against the powerful, but in the end it follows their model, adopting their customs and regulating its aspirations according to those of those in power. Shaken by terrible crises and pulled towards the worst excesses, it naturally finds itself a servant and vassal as soon as the smoke from the fire dissipates. It is impulsive like a youngster, sentimental like a young girl, unsteady like an old man. It obeys its most primitive instinct, the instincts that guided the birds when no society existed, but it gives in to the most rigorous discipline, to the most severe regimentation. It demands that its leaders sacrifice themselves for it, but rebels when exploited by them. It is generous and greedily eager. The rigidity of its habits ends up unbearable for it, but it flaunts its decadence. It is a partisan of the least necessary effort, but it adapts itself to the most exhausting work. It flees from fatigue, but dances upon the volcanoes. It is majoritarian but makes concessions to the minority. It reveres dictators but erects monuments honoring the fallen. A melancholy melody makes it cry, but the drum rolls awaken something in its memory from many generations ago — the desire to massacre, to destroy, to sack. It is cruel and tender, wasteful and miserly, vile and heroic. It is an immense, enormous crucible in which the most disparate elements, the most dissimilar characters, the most contradictory energies are melted down, in an oven that consumes the intellectual and manual activities of its members only for the pleasure of their destruction, a field constantly fertilized by the conquests and experiences of past generations. It appears as a woman in a constant state of pregnancy who doesn't seem to care who or what comes out of her womb. It is Society.

It will be conceded, then, that not everything is perfect in society, and it will be said that that is a part of every imperfect being. It is by means of authority that it maintains the bonds of solidarity that unite people — relatively weak bonds these — but it still has not been declared nor shown that human societies could exist without authority. Hypocrisy dominates in peoples' social relations, in every ambience and amongst every people; but still it has not been proven that it does not constitute in reality a necessity whose origin stems from the multiplicity of temperaments, that it might not be perhaps an instinctive expedient, destined to attenuate shocks and crashes and to take a little of the roughness out of the struggle for life.

The conditions of production and of the distribution of products favor the privileged and perpetuate the exploitation of those who are not privileged, but it remains for us to determine: 1) whether in the present circumstances of industrial production it would be possible to obtain, without that exploitation, the necessary production to maintain the economic functioning of human societies; 2) if every worker is not potentially privileged, that is, one who aspires to supplant that economic functioning to enjoy his own privileges.

It will be said, further, that it is insane to try to discover and establish the individual's responsibility, that he or she is suffocated, absorbed by everyone around, that the individual's thoughts and gestures reflect those of the others, that it cannot be any other way, and that if, in all the extensions of the social scales, the aspiration is to appear and not to be, the cause should be sought out in the present state of the general evolution of humanity, and not in the minimum component of the social ambience, the miniscule, lost atom, squandered in a formidable aggregation.

We do not intend to speak to those who think that there is no other way besides letting the "inevitable evolution of society" proceed along its slow course. We are addressing those who are dissatisfied, those who doubt. To those who are even discontented with themselves, to those who feel the weight of hundreds and hundreds of years of convention and prejudice. To those who thirst for a real, true life, for freedom of movement, for real activity, and who find nothing but

makeup, conformity, and servility around them. To those who want to know themselves more intimately. To those who are restless, tormented, to those who seek new sensations, to those who experiment with unheard of forms of individual happiness. To those who believe nothing shown them in this society. Let Society occupy itself with the rest — those who this world appreciates and speaks well of: they are the “satisfied”.

Anarchist Individualism

To live one's own life

"Why do you abandon the open path to take this narrow and rough road? Do you really know, little girl, where you're taking yourself? It just might end up that you'll find yourself in some unfathomable abyss. No one, not even the smugglers, dare to venture down it. Stay on the wide, spacious road that everyone else walks down, why don't you? Stay on the cared for and mile-marked path, with its signs and directions. It's so comfortable and pleasant to stroll along it!"

"Because I'm sick of the suffocating dust, sick of the route the rest follow; sick of the slow drivers and the rushing walkers. I'm tired of the monotony of the main drags, the horns on the cars and the trees that line it like soldiers. I want to breathe freely, to breathe as I please, to live my own life."

"You'll never manage to live your own life, poor girl. It's a chimera. The passing years will cure you soon enough of that desire. We always live in some way for other people, and they, in turn, live, to a certain extent, for us. He who plants wheat is not the same that makes bread. And the miner is not the one who drives the train. Life in society is an ensemble of very complicated human machinery, the functioning of which requires a great deal of vigilance, and demands numerous concessions and infinite attention.

"Think of the chaos which would come of it if everyone wanted to live their own life! It'd be just like hell, if everyone went down that road that no traveler visits, where bad weeds grow tangled, and which leads no one knows where."

"Oh, old man! It's just this complication of life in society that horrifies me. I'm shocked by the obligation to be dependent on the person next to me, an obligation that I feel weighing more heavily each day on my being, on my desire to live my own way. And I lose heart when faced with the idea of living the lives of others, of living for them; I want to be able to bite into clean mouthfuls without finding myself considered a glutton or a spoiled brat. I want to be able to lie down and stretch out on the grassy meadows, without fear of any guards or police. I love the roots, the trees, and the forest's creatures, the brambles and blackberry bushes of this path with no exit; what do I care about the gilded bread and palaces in the company of which I feel disgust? Why should I care where I'm going? I live for today, and I'm indifferent to tomorrow."

"Oh young girl! Others before you have spoken the same words, and they, like you, have gone towards the unknown. They never ended up coming back from that voyage. A long time after, on the now smoothed-over path, on the summits cleared of underbrush, little mountains of bones have been found, here and there — that's all that's left of them. Without a doubt, they lived their own lives, but at what cost? And for how long? Think about those tall towers emitting their thick clouds of smoke without end. They are the chimneys of the grandiose factories that humankind has erected — there, millions of men, on those whitewashed, spacious, and well ventilated premises, are working the marvelous machines that dispense to us humans the most necessary articles. And when night comes, these simple people, satisfied with a day's work well

done, conscious of the daily bread they win by the sweat of their brows, come home singing to their humble homes where their loved ones await them... Look over there at that rectangular building, with its large halls and its ample windows; that is the school, where selfless teachers prepare little beings like you to overcome life's challenges; little creatures who only find advantage in schooling — can't you hear the sweet sound of those little voices repeating the lessons that yesterday they were told to memorize?

"The ringing of those military-like bells and those measured steps, which will soon walk the twists and turns of the road before them, is there for you, to bring forth a troop of boys and girls marching with the flag held high before them, children who are kept in the schools for a certain period of time in order to teach them how to efficiently defend their fatherland, their nation, if any new menace rears its head.

"Don't you see that that's the way men evolve towards Progress, each of them working in their own specialization and according to their own capacities? There are, without any doubt, courtrooms and jails, but those are for the malcontents, for the few undisciplined ones who make them necessary. Regardless of its defects, the implantation of such a state of things has taken centuries. It is our civilization — imperfect, but perfectible — from whose influence you will never be able to escape unless you sink to who knows what depths."

"In those vast factories and workshops I see no more than flocks of slaves, executing monotonously, as if they were religious rites, the same gestures in front of the same machines, slaves who have lost all initiative and whose individual energy is decreased more and more every day, and every day it seems less and less true to me that these risks are part of the necessary conditions of human existence. From top to bottom, in the administrative hierarchies, only one watchword can be heard — drown individual initiative.

"Yes, when the night comes, I can hear your workers singing, but with bitter voices, and only after they've stopped in at least one of the innumerable taverns set up around the factories. The voices that come from your schools are the little voices of sad, bored children who can hardly keep down their desire to run, to leap the fences and walls, to climb the trees. Beneath the uniforms of your soldiers I only see beings who have had every sentiment of individual dignity annihilated in them. To discipline will, to kill energy, to restrain initiative — these are the imperatives of your society; these are the things people suffer so that your society might subsist. And you fear those who don't want to adapt to this so greatly that you seclude them in the somber darkness of jail cells. Between your "civilized man" of the twentieth century, whose only preoccupation seems to be avoiding the necessary effort for sustaining his existence, and the man "dressed in animal skins", which wins out? The latter did not fear danger; he did not know the factory or the barracks, neither the tavern nor the brothel, neither jail nor school. You have conserved, modifying them only in appearance, the superstitions and prejudices of these people you'd call "savage". But you lack their energy, you lack their valor, and you lack their frankness."

"Well, I agree that in the panorama of our present society there are some dark shadows. But there are generous men who have tried and still try to introduce greater equity and justice to its functioning. They are recruiting partisans, and perhaps tomorrow they will be the irresistible majority. Don't go down these out-of-the-way paths — instead, hold to good principles, follow a method. Believe me, I'm an experienced old man; success doesn't tend to accompany those who don't systematically pursue it. Science teaches that it is necessary to regulate life. Hygienists, biologists, and doctors will supply you in its name with the necessary formulas for its prolonga-

tion and for your happiness. To lack authority, principles, discipline, and a plan is the worst of incoherencies.”

“I do not need, nor do I want your discipline. With regards to my experiences, I want to have them for myself. It is from them, and not from you, that I will draw my rules of conduct. I want to live my own life. Slaves and lackeys terrify me. I hate those who dominate, and those who let themselves be dominated sicken me. He who bends before the whip is worth no more than he who wields it. I love danger, and the unknown, the uncertain, seduces me. I’m filled with a desire for adventure, and I don’t give a damn for success. I hate your society of bureaucrats and administrators, millionaires and beggars. I don’t want to adapt to your hypocritical customs nor to your false courtesies. I want to live out my enthusiasms in the pure, fresh air of freedom. Your streets, drafted according to plan, torture my gaze, and your uniform buildings make the blood in my veins boil with impatience. And that’s enough for me. I’m going to follow my own path, according to my passions, changing myself ceaselessly, and I don’t want to be the same tomorrow as I am today. I stroll along and I don’t let my wings be clipped by the scissors of any one person. I share none of your moralism. I am going forth, eternally passionate and burning with the desire to give myself to the world, to the first real person that approaches me, to the ragged trousered traveler, but never to the grave and conceited wise-men who would regulate the length of my stride. Nor to the doctrinaire who would like to clutter my mind with formulas and rules. I am no intellectual; I am a human being — a woman who feels a great vibration within herself before the impulses of nature and amorous words. I hate every chain, every hindrance; I love to walk along, nude, letting my flesh be caressed by the rays of the voluptuous sun. And, oh, old man! I will care so very little when your society breaks into a thousand pieces and I can finally live my life.”

“Who are you, little girl, fascinating like a mystery and savage like instinct?”

“I am Anarchy.”

Anarchism.

The religious consider the individual to be a manifestation of divinity’s designs; the legalists consider the individual as a function of the law; the socialists consider the individual as needing proper administration, as an instrument, as a kind of machine of production and consumption; the revolutionaries consider the individual to be a soldier of the revolution. They all tend to forget the individual as him or her self, outside of all authority. They ignore the individual as an individual unity, subtracted from all domination and coercion of all kinds. This is the empty space anarchism fills.

Anarchy derives from two Greek words meaning negation or absence of government, of authority, of command. Often times it is associated with disorder, but we are not interested in this boring, oversimplified meaning. It is certain that it is a substantially negative term, but by extension it can be used to designate the philosophical conception of society that excludes the concepts of government and authority. The anarchist is whoever brings forth anarchy, the “realizer” of the ideas and acts from which anarchy springs forth. Anarchism is, seen from the speculative, practical, or descriptive standpoint, the ensemble of ideas and facts that are rich in anarchy and flow logically toward it. We consider anarchy and anarchism to be synonyms for whatever is anti-authoritarian and for anti-authoritarianism.

In practice, any individual who, because of his or her temperament or because of conscious and serious reflection, repudiates all external authority or coercion, whether of a governmental, ethical, intellectual, or economic order, can be considered an anarchist. Everyone who consciously rejects the domination of people by other people or by the social ambiance, and its economic corollaries, can be said to be an anarchist as well.

Origins of Anarchism

It is difficult to be precise about the historical origins of the anarchist movement. The first person who reacted consciously against the oppression of another individual or of a collectivity was an anarchist.

History and legends cite the names of numerous anarchists: Prometheus of mythology, Satan of the bible, Epictetus, Diogenes, and the mythical Jesus could be considered, under many aspects, old kinds of anarchists. The philosophical origins of the movement seem to go back to the Renaissance, or more precisely, to the Reformation, which, planting in spirits the ideas of free thought and individual inquiry into biblical matters, went beyond the objectives of its initiators and led to the diffusion of rational critique in all subjects. This seed of free thinking, where the development and perfection of a rational critique of institutions and conventions began, came to be planted when people started to dissect the puerile words upon which orthodox believers build their faith.

In the end, the movement finished its work of free thought and submitted to analysis all kinds of laws and rules, morals and teaching programs, economic conditions and social relations. Thus, anarchism became the manifestation of the most dangerous and fearful opposition that the tyrants of government have ever faced.

Society

Marginal, apart from all political parties, like lost youths, the living antitheses of socialism, the anarchists find themselves in fundamental disagreement with present society. They deny the law, and if they rise up against the authority of those who claim to represent them, against the acts of government, it is because they affirm that they want to create their own laws, and find in themselves the energy necessary to live.

In order to survive and perpetuate themselves, societies need to appeal to an infinite number of authorities: the authority of gods, the authority of legislators, the authority of wealth, the authority of respectability, of traditions, of ancestors, of leaders, of directors, of programs, of plans. Everyone either accepts or protests against being determined by his or her environment. The anarchist pushes, on the other hand, for free access to the material means necessary to determine his or her own life without any authority.

Anarchist Individualism

We have seen that anarchism is the philosophy of antiauthoritarianism. Anarchist individualism is, as such, a practical conception of this philosophy, and it entreats every individual to seek out and discover in practice, in everyday life, his or her own theory.

The anarchist individualists found their conception of life and of its hopes on the “individual act”. This means that in spite of and in opposition to all the abstractions created by the secular or the religious forces in society, all the traditional ideals of fraternity, the anarchist declares that the basis for all collectivities, for all societies, for all ethnic, territorial, economic, intellectual, moral, and religious entities is found in the individual. Without the individual none of the above would exist.

It will be objected, in vain, that in the absence of a social environment the individual could not exist nor develop. Not only is this absolutely false in the literal sense, since humans have not always lived in society, but it is also false when one analyzes the problem in its diverse aspects, since the following fact cannot be denied: without individuals there would be no social environment.

The human being is the origin, the foundation of humanity. It is only too clear that the individual was the precursor for the group. Society is the product of individual additions.

To be an individualist does not necessarily mean to live isolated and without associating with others. Some people find that alone they are stronger than in groups. These people say that when authority attacks, it does so more energetically when it is a question of an association than when it is a question of individuals. And that when it defends itself it is weaker and more defenseless against individuals. Some of these solitary individuals say that one can never know for certain that one’s comrade will not become a traitor, even involuntarily. Others say that association permits that better results can be obtained, that is, a more ample production in less time, and with less effort. For others, association represents a kind of instinctive necessity.

The individualist cannot be considered simply as a personal denier of authority, but as a personal negator of exploitation. The individualist does not want to be an exploiter, nor does he or she want to be exploited.

The dominion of the “I”

The individual can be considered to be a synonym for the “I” or the “self”. Now, the individualist doesn’t put limits on the development of his or her “self”, and does not restrict its personality on the social plane, but is careful not to invade, not to usurp the ground on which a comrade develops and moves. Individualism, the dominion of the “I”, demands the following conception of the relations between the “self” and the “other”, the “I” and the “not I”: An individual, no matter how insignificant or low, cannot be sacrificed to any other individual — no matter how important the other is — nor to a group of people, nor to the majority, nor to the social environment.

The individualists and the systematic revolutionaries

In the majority of cases, the individualists are not revolutionaries in the systematic and dogmatic sense of the word. They say that a revolution does not provide a real improvement in the individual’s life, any more than a war does. In times of revolution, the fanatics of rival parties and of fighting tendencies worry more than anything else about dominating each other, and to achieve that domination they avail themselves of a violence and hate that often isn’t even seen in the enemy armies. Like war, a revolution can be compared with a case of the fever: the sickness behaves in much the same way every time. After the fever has gone down the patient

returns to his or her previous state. History teaches us that after revolutions, counterstrikes and repressions always take place that separate them from their original objectives. It is necessary, then, to start with the individual. This notion should be propagated from person to person — it is criminal to force someone to react in a different way than that which he or she feels to be useful, advantageous, or agreeable to his or her own life, his or her own growth, and his or her own happiness. That this crime is committed by the State, by the law, by the majority, or by a solitary individual does not make a difference in terms of the problem itself. It is the same crime. Anarchist Individualism comprises the ideas of “individuals” who react when faced with “the social”. These concepts, like I said before, should be the fruit of reflection or the consequence of a reflective temperament, and not the result of a passing overexcitement, foreign to the nature of those who demand it.

The individualist’s conditions of existence

Anarchist individualism presents no project, and instead proposes an ambiance in which the individual has precedence over the human mass. It is a new orientation of thought and sensibility more than the fictitious future construction of a new social order.

When it is asked of the individualist to extend his point of view, the individualist recognizes frankly that he or she would only be incapable of existing and developing his or herself in a humanity in which an infinite number of self-governing groups and of self-governing, isolated individuals function simultaneously, practicing all kinds of economic, political, scientific, affective, literary, and recreational postulates. Definitively, a forest of individual and collective realization. Here and there everything happening — here everyone receiving what they need, there each one getting whatever is needed according to their own capacity. Here, gift and barter — one product for another; there, exchange — product for representative value. Here, the producer is the owner of the product, there, the product is put to the possession of the collectivity. Here omnivorousness, there vegetarianism, or any other hygienic or culinary tendency ending in “ism”. Here sexual union and family, there freedom or promiscuity. Here, the materialists, there the spiritualists. Here the progenitor mother, there the children brought up by the group. Here the search for artistic or literary emotions, there scientific investigation and experimentation. Here the schools of voluptuousness, there those of austerity... And meanwhile it is understood that any individual has the chance to, at any time, migrate from one group to another or to withdraw from the whole. And this without the possibility existing that the more powerful groups would feel themselves capable and/or tempted to absorb the weaker groupings, or that any group would want to violently integrate isolated individuals.

Our kind of Individualist.

The individualist, in our conception, loves life and fortitude. Proclaims and exalts the happiness of being alive. Recognizes sincerely that one’s own happiness is the objective. The individualist is not an ascetic, and the mortification of the flesh is repugnant to him or her. The individualist is a passionate person. Going forth without tinsel and glitter, chin up, the individualist sings with gusto, accompanied by the flutes of Pan. Communicating with nature by means of his energy, that energy stimulates instinct and thought in the individualist. He is neither young nor old.

Only whatever age he feels. And while there is a drop of blood left in his veins, he struggles to conquer a place in the sun. The individualist does not impose, nor does he want others to impose on him. Repudiates bosses and gods. Knows how to love and knows how to repent and change. Gushes forth with love for his own, those of his world, but he is horrified by “false comrades”. He is brave, and conscious of his own personal dignity. He gives himself shape, sculpts himself, and reacts towards the outside. He withdraws from society here and lavishes himself upon it there. He is not worried by prejudices and laughs at those who concern themselves with “what others might think”. He likes art, sciences, and letters. Loves books, study, meditation, and creativity. An artisan, not a day laborer. A generous, sensible, and sensual person. Thirsts for new experiences and fresh sensations. But if he advances through life like a fast-speeding car, he does it on the condition that it’s him driving, animated by the will to determine for himself which role wisdom, and which part pleasure, will play in his life.

Authority and Domination

The law of continual progress

We are not ignorant of the theses of those who uphold the law of “continual progress.” This idea is not new. There are seeds of it in Greece and Rome, and later in the mystics of the middle ages. They announced that in the same way as the reign of the Son follows the reign of the Father, after that will come the reign of the holy spirit, in which there will be no more errors nor sins. Leaving mysticism aside, this conception was affirmed and clarified first by Bacon and Pascal, and became general later with Herder, Kant, Turgot, Condorcet, Saint-Simon, Comte, and their successors, the utopian and scientific socialist schools, and definitively by the evolutionists and fatalists of all kinds.

We are not ignorant of the fact that the idea of the law of constant and uninterrupted progress was accepted, exalted, and vulgarized by the poets, the literati, the philosophers, and by many scientists. It played amongst men the role of consoler, which in previous centuries, when faith ruled them, was played by religion. But with careful examination we can see quickly that there is nothing less founded, scientifically speaking, than this supposed law.

Above all, it is impossible to prove experimentally that the acts of every human being, of every people, of all peoples, are immutable and incontestable effects of primordial circumstance. In reality we care as little for the origin, the beginnings of humanity, as we do for the end or the goals towards which it proceeds. But even knowing exactly what this origin was, we have no scientific criterion that permits us to distinguish what is progress and what is not. We can say that there is movement, a flow — and nothing else. Men, according to their aspirations or to the party they belong to, define this movement as “progress” or “regression”. And that’s all.

Behind this conception of continuous and unavoidable progress, behind its scientific appearance, a secret mystical and determinist thinking rings. Here we see it mix itself in with the idea that the individual is “nature becoming conscious of itself”. There we see it accompanied by the idea that all animal evolution announces and moves towards the rise of the biped of erect stature and which speaks words, that is, the human being. It is pure anthropocentrism, and it forgets the simplest reality — that on the lowliest forms of life that the universe bears, below the atmosphere that surrounds it like a diaphanous veil, a whole multitude of parasites scratch and vegetate. Some accident has overexcited, apparently, the intelligence of one of the many parasitic species living on this body — the earth — and caused it to believe it was permitted to dominate over all the other species. Was this good luck or bad luck for the inhabitants of the planet? We do not know. We have no idea what the result would have been had some other species of vertebrate prevailed, for instance the elephant or the horse, or other varieties of creatures. Nothing proves that nature could not have “become conscious of itself” in a better way through those creatures. Nothing proves that a new geological, biological, or other kind of accident would not take away from man his throne, his power, and his arrogance.

But facts are facts. As things stand, man seems to be, from the intellectual point of view, the most gifted of the terrestrial parasites. Let us return to and study the law of continual progress, the thesis of progressive and necessary evolution. Now, this is a law that cannot be accepted without admitting, at the same time, that not only are the things that happen and have happened necessary, but that they serve and have served, necessarily, the happiness of the human race. To this conclusion arrived August Comte and Taine etched it into stone with the phrase “what exists has a right to exist.” Everything happens, then, for the good of the best of evolutions. In the past as well as in the present. The violence applied to bodies and the violence exercised over opinions; the inquisition; the war councils; the wars and epidemics; the strangulation of undomesticated consciousnesses and the fires wherein the heretics were burned; the death squads; the burning liquids; the asphyxiating gases; the bombardments; the “cleaning out” of the trenches by blows of the bayonet; the use of the atomic bomb and the destruction of Hiroshima; the concentration camps; the ovens — Everything is for the best according to this view. The prisoners of war massacred in spite of having been promised their freedom, the Christians of imperial Rome thrown to the lions for food, the extermination of the Albigenses and the Anabaptists, the pardons handed down from the governors, reasons of state, perverse laws. Slavery, pariahs, the homeless, the jails. The feudal lords that played with their subjects’ lives more easily than with a dog’s life. The monopolists and the exploited, the privileged and those marginalized by the laws. Everything is for the best, everything worked, everything was concurrent in the march towards progress, all these things facilitated and prepared for the coming of ineluctable and universal happiness.

It is impossible! Our reason rebels against this idea!

We look down into this bottomless whirlpool in which the greatest civilizations and most famous ages have sunk, into the depths where the most resonant and grandiose historical periods have been washed away, and from these unfathomable abysses we hear no songs of happiness and pleasure, but instead we hear an unharmonious, horrendous cacophony of protests, cries, and lamentations; feelings, aspirations and necessities ignored, mutilated, offended, repressed. The ferocious and a bit contrived clamorings of the accommodated try to cover and suffocate the screams of rage and hatred from those who had no chance to feel satisfied. But they never succeed.

Rhetorical figures? Sentimental arguments? I concede it. But they are proven by facts, and documented by historical experience. At every moment in the development of a civilization — whatever the influences that preceded their growth — the discontented, the oppressed, the marginalized of one class or another have risen up, alone or in groups; certain people stood up and proclaimed that their happiness was denied by and in the margin of what the dogmas, the conventions, the laws, the decrees, the dictatorships or mandates of mediocre minds, the elite or the social environment imposed. The flame of resistance and nonconformity has never been entirely put out, even in the most sinister days of humanity’s evolution. It is certain that the fire of hope, hope for a happiness different from the official happiness, from the happiness of those around, hasn’t always burned with the same light. But because of this it has never lit any less brilliantly the road of rebellion and individual autonomy, the road on which the majority of humanity has always walked. If it was necessary to attribute to a law the improvements and betterments that some believe they find in people’s social relations, that law might be that of the “continuous persistence” of the spirit of non-conformism, and not at all the so-called law of “continual progress.”

The origin and evolution of domination

Domination was exercised at first by one person upon another. The most physically strong, the best armed, dominated the weakest, the one with the least defenses, and forced the latter to comply with the former's will. The man who only had a piece of wood to defend himself with had to cede, eventually, to the man who persecuted him with a steel pointed spear or with a bow and arrow. Later, or perhaps contemporaneously, another factor determined the exercise of domination — cunning. Men came forth who began to succeed in convincing their fellows that they possessed certain secret magical powers capable of doing them great harm, of causing many inconveniences to their persons — and to their goods — if they were to resist the authority of the former. It is possible that these “magicians” were convinced of the reality of their power. Either way, domination has, everywhere and always, two founts — trickery and violence.

In present societies, domination is only rarely exercised — in normal times — with such brutality as it has been. When it is practiced in such a way, it happens thanks to custom, moral or legal sanction, or thanks to an irregular state of things. It is certain that there are still mothers who hit their kids because they disobey, husbands that hit their wives because they reject the legally accepted obedience, and police that fire upon escaping prisoners or vice-versa. But this is tolerated by habit or is exceptional. When domination is exercised over a human collective for the benefit of an autocrat, it happens because that autocrat has the support of a sufficient number of complicit parties or satellites that have a vested interest in seeing that authority survive, and these complicit parties help that domination by forming mercenary armed troops, sufficiently powerful to make all resistance futile.

Domination is rarely exercised for the profit of an autocrat, at least not directly. It is always practiced for the benefit of a class, of a caste, a political clientele, a plutocracy, a social elite, or of the majority of a collective. It supports itself on a regimentation of a political, economic, civil, military, legal, moral or religious kind. And it is made holy by institutions regulated by leaders.

Concerning “good” and “evil”

To understand the evolution of the morality of fraternal society, it is indispensable to remember that “good” is a synonym for “permitted” and “evil” a synonym for “prohibited.” Someone — the bible says — “did what was wrong in the eyes of the eternal being”, a phrase repeated in various passages of the Hebrew holy books, as well as those of the Christians. But it is necessary to express that more clearly — someone did something that was prohibited by the moral and religious law established by the theocracy... In all times and in all the big groupings of people, what is “evil” is always the ensemble of acts condemned by convention, written or not — which varies according to epochs and societies.

So it is that it is “evil” to expropriate the property of he who possesses more than what he needs to live well, “evil” to mock the idea of God or of priests, “evil” to negate the “fatherland”, “evil” to have sexual relations with close relatives. And since prohibition is not enough, oral convention becomes crystallized in the law, whose function is to repress.

I recognize that the appearance of a difference between “good” and “evil” — the permitted and the prohibited — marks a new stage in the development of the intelligence of collectivities. At first

this difference was social; the individual lacked sufficient hereditary possessions and sufficient mental experience to avoid being submitted to sales and purchases and to the mob mentality.

It is understandable that “good” and “evil” are soaked with religious connotations. Over the course of the whole pre-scientific period, religion was for our ancestors what science is for us. The wisest men from those times on could only ever conceive of a supernatural explanation for the phenomena that they didn’t understand. Religious habits preceded civil habits.

However surprising it might be a posteriori to live in ignorance of conventional good and evil, it is an indication of intelligence. This is not because he who ignores the permitted and prohibited is more like nature — and much less because he is a person without morals — but simply because he doesn’t try to reason with the world and what happens.

On the other hand, the contemporary person who places him or herself individually outside and at the margin of good and evil reaches a superior stage in the evolution of human personality. He or she has studied the essence of the concept of social “good and evil”, and has asked what is left of the permitted and prohibited beyond appearances. If one prefers instinct to reason as a guide, it happens after careful comparison and reflection. If one gives way to reasoning in its confrontation with feelings, or gives way to feelings over reasoning, it is a deliberate act, after having felt one’s way along through one’s temperament. One then secedes from the traditional flock, because one considers that tradition and conventionalism are obstacles to one’s expansion. In other words, whoever rejects these concepts is a-moral, after having asked him or herself what “morals” are worth for humanity. There is a good distance between this person who gives up morality and the “primitive” person, who flees animality at great cost, whose brain is still obtuse, who is still incapable of opposing his or her personal determinism to the crushing determinism of the surrounding society.

To Live at Will

It's worth it to live.

Life can only be beautiful for those who take upon themselves the desire to live their own lives.

Life is only beautiful when considered individually, in its uniqueness. It is good to breathe the air, filled with the scent of the meadows, to climb on the slopes of wooded mountainsides, to sit tranquilly at the edge of a creek murmuring its unworried song, to dream on the beach; but on the condition that these are things experienced personally, on one's own account and not because it was written in some tourist guide.

But only what can be grasped fully can be enjoyed fully, since wherever the ability to appreciate and the feeling of good measure disappears, so too does freedom. The true enjoyment of life is a question of capacity, of attitude, of one's personal conception of it.

The "I" and the happiness of living.

Hindu philosophies, and those that come from them, believe — and there are those that do so more and less — that health comes from the suppression of individual life, that is, from the union of the subject and the object, the fusion of the self with the other, the "I" with the "not I". Now, all of nature shows us that it is precisely in the differentiation between the "I" and the "not I" where the vital phenomenon resides. And in the same way as nature does, scientific experience also shows that as minor as this difference is — that is, as minor as is the consciousness that the subject possesses of being separated from the object — it is as minor as the sensation and the manifestation of will. There is one phenomenon that unites the I and the not-I perfectly: the particular state called "death." Here too, nature and experience teach that simple and pure instinct pushes living organisms, from the lowest to the most elevated forms of life, to avoid death. For this reason these philosophies and its adepts seem to me to be plagued by morbidity.

I do not deny that people are nothing but an appearance, an aspect or a momentary state of matter, a passage, a bridge, a relativity. I do not ignore that the I is nothing, in the end, but the sum of the flesh, bones, muscles, and diverse organs contained in a kind of sack called "skin". In other words, that it is in this form that life for the individual being manifests itself. I admit all this. But as long as this bridge, this passage, this stage, this moment lasts, as long as this particular relativity gifted with consciousness lasts, my reason, upheld by scientific experience, and my feelings, guided by instinct, find it to be natural that this particular composite of aggregates would try to get the best out of all the faculties it possesses.

To limit the passions! To restrict the horizons of the happiness of living? Christianity tried to do so, and it failed. Socialism is trying to reduce humanity to a sole common denominator of necessity, and it will fail as well. Fourier saw it clearly when he launched his truly majestic

expression of “the utilization of the passions”. A reasonable being utilizes; only the senseless suppress and mutilate. “Utilize one’s own passions” yes, but for whose benefit? For one’s own benefit, to make one’s self someone “more alive”, that is, more open to the multiple sensations that life offers.

The happiness of living! Life is beautiful for whoever goes beyond the borders of conventional existence, whoever evades the hell of industrialism and commercialism, whoever rejects the stink of the alleys and taverns. Life is beautiful for whoever constructs it without care for the restrictions of respectability, of the fear of “what they’ll say” or of the gossips.

To live for living’s sake.

“To live for life’s sake”, to perform the proper function of bipeds of erect stature, gifted with consciousness and feeling, capable of analyzing emotions and cataloguing sensations. “To live for living’s sake”, and nothing else. To live for the voyage between places, to appreciate intellectual, moral, and physical experiences, scattered along each person’s path, to enjoy them, to provoke them when existence is too monotonous, to put an end to an experience, to renew one. “To live by living”, to satisfy the needs of the brain or the demands of the senses. To live to acquire knowledge, to struggle and form an autonomous individuality; to live for love, for embraces, for flower-gathering in the fields, for eating fruits from the trees. To live to produce and consume, to plant and reap, to sing harmonies with the birds, to stretch out in the sun on the beach by the oceanside and at the riverbank.

To live for living’s sake, to enjoy sharply, deeply, everything that offers life, to taste every drop from the cup of delights and surprises that life places before the lips of everyone who becomes conscious of their own being. Doesn’t all this perhaps incite noisy complaints from the secular and religious metaphysicists?

The individualists want “to live for living’s sake”. But they want to live in freedom, without any exterior morality imposed by tradition or by the majority establishing borders between what is illicit and what isn’t, between the prohibited and permitted.

To live for living’s sake, no longer racking one’s brains to ask one’s self if this life is consonant or not with a general criteria of virtue and vice, but putting all care in not doing anything that might diminish one’s respect for one’s self in one’s own eyes, nor anything that might damage one’s individual dignity.

To live for living’s sake, without oppressing others, without stepping on the aspirations or feelings of others, without dominating. Free beings, who resist with all their forces the tyranny of One Sovereign as much as they resist the suction of the multitudes.

To live, not for Propaganda nor for the Cause, nor for the Future Society, since all these things are contained within Life, but only for everyone to live, in freedom, their own life. Neither bosses, nor equals, nor servants — these are the conditions in which we want to “live for the sake of living”.

Not to suffer

We have no instinctive desire within us to suffer. We flee by nature from physical suffering. And in this repugnance we feel in perfect communion with all living organisms: with those who

are of the highest and lowest forms of animal life. We can, at many times, feel different from the rest of our fellows, different from the perspective of aspirations and desires, dissimilar in relation to doctrines and conceptions of life, but we have in common with all living beings who are healthy in body and mind that we do not want to suffer physically.

Every time we suffer, we suffer in our hearts. And we do everything we can — everyone in their own way — to eliminate, or at least to diminish that suffering, to cure ourselves of it. We follow diets, we ingest remedies, and we take precautions to put a quick end to pain and physical trials. None of us willingly accept physical suffering to any great degree.

Well, then, we don't want to suffer morally either. None of us has become a better person thanks to pain, regardless of the part of us it has devastated. We never find any path to perfection in pain. Every time we suffer "morally", our health changes, and when that suffering reaches an acute degree, "moralizing" phenomena do not follow: we lose our dreams, or our appetites, or our tastes. We also, sometimes, do things we would never have thought to do; our whole organism offers less and less resistance to epidemics because of our suffering.

We have never gained any benefits or advantages for our suffering. On the contrary, we come out of it diminished, devalued, mutilated by these painful periods that we pass through because of circumstances, people, events, or other elements. The idea of becoming complacent faced with one's own suffering is a concept with a Judeo-Christian origin which manifests two things — that suffering is the result of disobedience to the law, and that by means of suffering one can be forgiven for one's sins or for those of others. It is thus the product of self-hypnosis. Some may find, through morbidity, that suffering "contains something good". But we are not weak, nor are we mystics.

We hate, we detest suffering, because we want to live, because we love living, because we want to enjoy like Dionysus the fruits which life offers healthy organisms, that do not ask themselves — at the moment these fruits present themselves according to the seasons — whether they are good or bad, whether it is good or bad to take them.

On the other hand, physical suffering is not different from moral suffering. Suffering is indivisible.

If we want to physically enjoy life, our life, we do not desire it as "patrons", as dilettantes, but rather, with passion, with intensity, furor, with perseverance and refinement, with more and more intensity as our existence becomes fuller. Putting into play all our gifts of exterior perception and interior comprehension, all of our aptitudes, we gather — wherever we can discover and/or provoke them into existence — the pleasures, the happiness, and the chances we get by means of our own determination. And we do so by making use of all the deepest reserves of our sensibility.

The individualism of happiness

Our individualism is not an individualism of the graveyard, an individualism of sadness and of shadow, an individualism of pain and suffering. Our individualism is a creator of happiness, in us and outside of us. We want to find happiness wherever it is possible, thanks to our potential as seekers, discoverers, realizers.

Our interior health is measured thusly: we are still not nauseated by the experiences of life, we are still disposed to trying new experiences, to begin again what was not finished or what did not bring us all the happiness and pleasure we were promised; there is in us a love, an infinite

love, for happiness. When it is not springtime that sings inside us, when in the depths, deep in the depths of our beings, there are neither flowers nor fruits, nor voluptuous aspirations, that means that something important has been thrown away and lost, and, I'm afraid, that it is time to think about going down that dark road from whence no one returns.

There are youths that call themselves individualists, but their individualism does not attract us. It is stingy, arid, timorous, incapable of conceiving of experience for experience's sake, pessimistic, pompous, furiously documenting everything or documented in everything, mystified, confused, neurotic, colorless and without inner heat; an individualism that has not even the necessary force, once it sets out on the path of aloneness and freedom, to sink itself into it fully. Oh, what a disgusting individualism! They can keep it; we don't envy them.

There is the individualism of those who want to create their own happiness dominating, administering, exploiting their peers, making use of their social influence, whether it be governmental, monetary, or monopolist. It is the individualism of the bourgeoisie. And it has nothing in common with ours.

It is the individualism of those who think themselves to be superior, who want to crush the rest under the weight of their morality, of their intellectual culture; the individualism of the "hardcore" (read, those who are hard with others), of the insensitive; of the conceited who won't bend over to pick up a gold coin, of those who don't cry and who exist in that seventh heaven beyond human reality. I fear that this is only the individualism of the fatuous and presumptuous, of the angels that one day sooner or later end up thrashing about in the ocean of uniform mediocrity, the individualism of human turkeys who in the end are content with a little shell to live in to calm their ambition. This individualism does not interest us either.

We want an individualism that radiates happiness and benevolence, like a hearth radiates warmth. We want an individualism that shines even in the wintriest of hearts. An individualism of bacchantes, deliriously free, which extends itself, expands, and overflows, without owners, borders, or limits. Whoever doesn't want to suffer nor carry heavy loads, but doesn't want to make any one else suffer or carry the weight for them. An individualism that doesn't feel humiliated when called to apologize or to make up for damage caused by carelessness. Oh, what a rich, magnificent individualism!

Cunning as a defensive weapon

Anarchist individualists who use trickery as a defensive weapon are to be reproached. However, without cunning and trickery, either authority would have humiliated them or the environment would have absorbed them long ago. To subsist, that is, to conserve, prolong, intensify, and exteriorize his life, the individualist, the outsider, cannot, under pain of suicide, refuse any method of struggle, including cunning. He cannot reject any means, except the imposition of authority. And this is so because he finds himself to be in a state of inferiority in relation to his social environment, which always seeks to extend its usurpation over what he is and what he has.

Who doesn't play the games of deceit? Perhaps the worker, who is careful not to reveal his ideas to the boss, the boss who steals from the worker a part of the fruits of his labor, the "paster" of seditious manifestoes who puts them on the walls of public buildings at night; the distributor of subversive works who works cautiously so he will not be surprised? No, certainly not them.

And why should the use of cunning be disdained in others? Why should we let our adversaries know all our thoughts? Why open ourselves and our drives to the first one who comes along? The individualist does not live as a “friend” in the ambiance that surrounds him. He concedes to society the least possible of himself, and tries to snatch what is in his reach, since he didn’t ask to be born, and, once he was submerged in the world, an irreparable act of authority was exercised over him, which excludes all possibilities of any bilateral contract being made.

Passive Resistance

Anarchist individualists deny any pedagogical value to violence. They do not recognize any practical utility for it in the solution of people’s and collectives’ problems. The use of violence solves nothing. It is only an affirmation of brute superiority, a fundamentally anti-individualist way of doing things because it requires the use of physical authority. The only form of revolutionary action recognized by anti-authoritarian individualists is the special tactic commonly called “passive resistance.”

Passive resistance is an act of rebellion or an ensemble of insurrectionary actions different from the manifestations, the uprisings, and the armed struggles of the world. This kind of resistance never upholds itself by way of the passing and superficial excitation of the masses. Passive resistance, which can be used to achieve all kinds of objectives, supposes the preliminary education and initiation of those that use it.

For instance, one can, without raising barricades, abstain from all activity, from all work, from all functions that imply the maintenance or consolidation of a certain regime; refuse to pay the taxes destined to further the functioning of institutions and services one considers to be useless and unnecessary, and even totally irrational; from tariffs on consumption to the war tax, one can refuse to pay it. One can refuse to send one’s children to State schools, whose teaching one may judge to be tangential, unilateral, and pernicious for the education and development of one’s progeny.

Professors and doctors who are such thanks to an official diploma can be rejected. One may deny any response to commissaries, judges, magistrates, tribunals, civil, criminal, or correctional courts of justice. One can refuse to obey, to adapt to the wording of a decree, of a law, of an order that one considers to be contrary to one’s own conception of life. One can refuse to work for a wage that he deems to be too low or for a number of hours that he considers too high. One can stand up against all kinds of social, administrative, or juridical pretensions and usurpations that one considers to be capable of dealing a decisive blow to one’s autonomy.

Let us suppose the existence of a movement based on “passive resistance” that develops on a grand scale, and is not directed by any “capo”, but which would be studied, premeditated, and decided on individually by each of its participants. Let us suppose a movement of partial or general passive resistance — what could a state, a government, or any dictatorship do, the individualists ask, against this great, silent, decisive stoppage, against this total abstention?

The individualists say that the total absence any chaos, of any activity, would make it impossible for any government to intervene, because that would disturb the public peace. Because each passive resistor or abstentionist would be individually conscious of his or her own refusal, there would be no leaders to arrest. What could the most despotic of governments do against the “crossed-arm general strike”, against a movement of passive resistance comprising of hundreds

of thousands of people, from which one would only find defectors very rarely because only those who were driven by their own will would participate in it? They could massacre, gun down those hundreds of thousands, those millions of adherents, but that would not resolve the conflict, and moreover, it would go against the interests of those same directors of people.

Who isn't conscious that abstention, prepared, matured, and consciously practiced, would have a different value, a different reach than does that noisy, tumultuous and irreflexive agitation that drags in its flocks — whether they wish it or not — a number of followers ready to flee at the sight of the first serious obstacle, some because they had only let themselves be dragged in by the current, and others because they had never thought about the possible consequences a prolonged general strike entails? It is natural, given these considerations, that the tactic of passive resistance will have been the focus of attention for theorists of anarchist individualism, and that these consider it the most appropriate instrument to express their demands.

Risks.

Whoever speaks of an independent life supposes “risks”. A life free of rocky roads, full of victories, never running any eventual risks even in thought, is inconceivable. It can occur that in a society based on an egalitarian organization of production and consumption, economic risk becomes reduced to an insignificant minimum, but an expansive realm would still remain — the realm of psychological relativities — where risk would persist in being a factor in individual evolution.

On the other hand, it is not one of the individualists' intentions to refuse risks in their own lives. A smaller risk corresponds to a smaller individual initiative. To a smaller personal initiative corresponds a decreasing individual autonomy. The theory of the least effort doesn't pertain to any individualist concept; it is the doctrine of those without energy who let themselves be dragged around blandly by the knockout-pill current of conventions, of prejudices and social comforts. Life conceived of outside of social “arrangements” requires an effort. And there is no effective effort without initiative. The withdrawal of individual initiative means the death of will, of effort, of force, that is, the disappearance of the impulse towards a distinct orientation.

Life is only so as much as it is experienced directly. Life freed of authoritarian morality, life unconditioned by any previous gesture, that ignores the changing circumstances in order to better reveal new forms and new aspects. This kind of Life cannot completely avoid risks.

The individual must conquer a full enjoyment of life by means of his own will and action. There, where the adventure has died, only what is regulated remains; there, where there are no more furtive hunters, remain the guards of the hunt. There, where risk is nonexistent, there is nothing more than people carved according to a mold, people cut out of patterns. Robots, functionaries, managers. There, where the bohemian lifestyle disappears, there are only people whose lives are well organized and who are viciously cunning.

Now, to refuse to take risks in one's individual life is equivalent to making one's self a robot. Without risks, life would end up reduced to a monotonous chain of known and precedented acts, whose repercussions would resemble hopeless litanies. That those who don't see anything but a perfect producer and a perfect consumer in human beings, that the “hierarchizers” continue with their annihilation of all risks, that's OK. They've got character. The communists and the collectivists don't know how to realize their ideal society without people who behave like robots.

But to say that the anarchist individualists only “mention” risks? Well! Free life, real, true life, the individualist life, is a constant risk, a constant effort, an experience that doesn’t end except with death.

The day when risk — under any form — is abolished from the face of our poor, small earth, it will drag away in its ruins the last of the individualists.

Getting old: The complicated life

To know that one is aging; to become conscious that one’s own hair is going white, and one’s face becoming marked with the lines of years; to feel one’s self to be in the bloom of youth — What does it matter, after all, that grey or whitened hairs appear on one’s head? What is important is that I don’t feel old, nor that I am growing old. One has only the age one feels — he who feels old is old. It is certain, considering the social ridicule and societal conventions that exist, but he who cannot confront them is condemned to the age he is given, or that which is shown to him.

To live a complex life is not an easy thing, after all. One can count on the fingers the people who are really apt enough right now for a really complex life, that is, for a life that would involve living contemporaneously various existences without these becoming confused or impeding each other. What a flowering of capacities that would be for those who would be capable of manifesting themselves, expanding themselves into multiple activities that accompany each other without conflicting with each other! What a wealth, what a beauty this accumulation of experiences! It is infinitely probable that the man of tomorrow will not be the specialized man, the man of one purpose, but the man of multiple possibilities, multiple reasonings, sufficiently potent and energetic to have various existences simultaneously and in a parallel fashion. I like to think that this would be aided along by innumerable voluntary associations that would have it as their objective — each in their own sphere — to leave unexplored no realm of those things that the investigation and experiencing of which are enjoyed by people.

Faith.

Doubtless the fanatics, the enthusiasts of the centuries when belief ruled over people, had faith. Faith, as the “substance of the things hoped for”, as the “proof of what cannot be seen”. And through faith “they did great things”. They persevered in spite of the torments. They were whipped, stricken, tortured, burnt, without denying their beliefs, without a single cloud obfuscating their vision. At the beginning, they were a small handful of men. The more they died, the more numerous they became. And these were not only the disciples of a Cakya-Mouni, or a Jesus of Nazareth, nor the worshippers of Jehovah, or the followers of Mohammed. During the great periods of crisis, in times of intellectual repression, of revolutions, of wars, there are always people who rise up, who “have faith” in a better future society, or in the final triumph of their fatherland. People who sacrifice themselves for the free expression of their thought. For their concept of the future society. For an ideal that will never come within their reach. To conquer, keep, or lose a freedom that death prevents them from enjoying.

Perhaps some of you will tell me that you have lost faith in the invisible, or that you never had it. Or also that “we live on food, not words”, or further, that “every happiness that your hand cannot grasp is a dream”. That you don’t want to sacrifice themselves for an ideal. Or to make

the least possible effort towards the ignoble “future”. That you want to live right away, without worrying about chasing phantoms.

And it’s good; but if one has no energy nor initiative, one never reaches any horizons, the sky is low, and the air unbreathable. There is no objective.

Contemplate the herb that waves amongst the grassy hillsides, or the creek that sinks and gurgles from rock to rock, or the little bird that flaps its wings in flight, or the spider just starting to weave her new web. Come, observe, listen. Everything, everyone, will show you it has faith in itself. Faith that they will fulfill their reason for existence for themselves, until they live like beings instead of like things. Faith in one’s own creation. Your present fatigue, since nothing seems important or everything seems as insignificant as can be. Your faith in the result of your present effort, even when the last one failed. A faith so powerful and practical that it produced the miracle of the continuous existence of life in spite of all the geological, meteorological alterations and agitations; in spite of the destruction and depredations that that destroyer without scruples, man, commits.

To have faith in one’s self. Faith in anyone who undertakes their own will and effort. In the work we dedicate ourselves to. Today, right now. For today, for the past which is nothing but the recurring present, and for the future into which we penetrate at every moment. For everything there is to be, since we continually become. For everything we’re about to do, because our feet are always in the stirrups. What is the invisible, the indefinite, the Ideal any good for? Aren’t you a part of Reality? Isn’t the work your hands do a proof that you are more than just a shadow? Get moving, then! The rest — enthusiasm, ardor, perseverance, tenacity, the quest for new risks and a disdain for danger — will come naturally.

And this is what you call living?

Wake with the dawn. Moving quickly, taking cars and trains, hurry to work. That is, enclose yourself in a more or less spacious spot, more or less deprived of clean air. Sitting in front of a machine, transcribe memos the half of which wouldn’t even be compiled if they were written by hand. Or, fabricate, working some mechanical instrument, objects that come out the same every time. Or, never moving away from a motor, watch vigilantly over its functioning. Or, otherwise, mechanically and automatically, sitting rigidly in front of a loom, repeat the same gestures continually, the same movements. And do so for hours and hours, without any variation, without distraction, without any change in atmosphere — every day! Is this what you call “living”?

Produce! Produce more! Always produce! Like yesterday, like the day before yesterday. Like tomorrow, unless sickness or death surprises us — produce? Things that seem useless but whose superficiality is hardly ever discussed. Complicated objects which are mostly of a terribly low quality but which can be used unsatisfactorily for some purpose or another. Objects, the process of producing which is rarely understood in its entirety by any of the workers that share their fabrication — Produce? Without knowing what is to become of one’s own product. Without being able to refuse to produce for those who we dislike and oppress us, without being permitted to take the smallest autonomous, individual initiative; Produce: now, hurry! Become an instrument of production that gets itself going in the morning, that drives itself on, that takes on too much, that stretches its capacity until the point of complete exhaustion — This is what you call living?

Leave in the morning on the hunt for a juicy clientele. Cajole the “good client”; doggedly. Run from home, to your car, from your car to work, from work back to the commute. Make fifty sales pitches a day. Spill sweat and blood so your commodity becomes preferred, and the commodity of the next salesman becomes devalued. Come home late, overexcited, fed up, agitated, make those around us unhappy, deprive yourself of all interior life, of all the feelings that pull you to seek out a more beautiful, full humanity — And this is what you call “living”?

Dry yourself up between the four walls of a prison-cell. Feel the unknown of a future that separates us from what is ours, what we feel to be ours at least, because of solidarity or because of having shared risks together. Feeling, if condemned to death or prison, the sensation that our lives are fleeing from us, that there is nothing more we can do to determine our own lives. And do so for months, for whole years. Incapable of struggling anymore. Nothing but a number, a toy, a rag, a thing — caught up, watched over, spied on, exploited. Everything punished with sentences totally out of proportion to the crime. And this is what you call living?

Put on a uniform. For one, two, three years, repeat incessantly the act of killing men. In the exuberance of youth, in your fullest virility, become a recluse in immense buildings where people enter and leave at fixed times. Consume, parade, awaken, sleep, and do everything and nothing according to an established schedule. Train yourself to die, or to produce deaths. Become a tool, a robot, in the hands of the privileged, the powerful, the monopolists, the hoarders, only because you yourself don’t happen to be one of the privileged, nor one of the powerful, nor an owner of men — is this what you call living?

Incapable of learning, loving, being satisfied alone, of spending time according to your liking — having to be shut up inside while the sun shines and the flowers invigorate and intoxicate the air with their scent. Not able to go to the tropics when the snow covers the windows, or to the north when the heat becomes terrible and the grass dries in the fields. To find, erected before you always and at every turn, laws, borders, morals, conventions, rules, judges, offices, jails, and men in uniform who maintain this mortifying order of things.

And this is what you call living? You, who are in love with the intensity of life, you, who adore “progress”, all of you, you who push forth the wheels of this blood-guzzling machine of a “civilization” — I don’t call it living — I call it vegetating. I call it dying.

The individualist city.

The individualists have always shown a particular interest in the so-called colonies: free environments, vital activity, work in common.

The reason for this sympathetic interest is in an admiration for the effort that a more or less numerous group of people can put forth in order to create, in the heart of this society ruled by laws and by a general conformity, islands or oases where one can put forth an effort and materialize their own ideals. It is still not possible for these ‘autonomous zones’ to escape the impositions of the society surrounding them, except in exceptional cases. The individualists have always observed that the founders of these colonies, the initiators, and the participants in them always had about them a certain determination to liberate themselves from the old world’s impositions, or, at least, to reduce them to the minimum possible, with a will to last in spite of all the obstacles and problems. That these attempts have had a favorable result or not, whether they founded themselves in religious principles or a-religious ones, makes little difference. What interests us is not

whether they remained standing, but their resistance to all the internal and external factors that collaborated or allied together to corrupt them, to dissolve them, and to make them disappear.

The problem is that, sacrificing all to the common denominator, these “communitarians” find themselves estranged before the concept of a union based on the sovereignty of the individual. Is it impossible to imagine a formation that would have the independence of the individual as its object, and not the common preoccupation about the equilibrium between production and consumption?

If the major worry of certain “unique beings” on “our” earth consists in living together without sacrificing any of their own individual autonomy, how can that problem be resolved?

Liberty of solitude and liberty of company! Absolute respect for one’s person, for what belongs to someone and what depends on him or her, and the faithful respect of freely arrived-at conventions. These are some of the foundations on which the function and development of a city of this kind could base themselves, a city which would not have the pretense of being an example for anyone nor of prefiguring a future society, and less of resolving the social question. The objective would be simply to celebrate a permanent gathering in an established place, a place for friends, for individualist comrades, of “unique beings” linked together by merit of similar thoughts, by a shared disdain for hypocrisy, two-facedness, social, moral, or intellectual prejudice, or anything else that makes the social environment a residence for dementia and an asylum of incoherence.

The above lines have no other end than to “launch” an idea that will probably end up having a practical result in the future, or which perhaps will meet with complete indifference.

The danger of mediocrity-rule.

There is a danger graver than that of conservatism, clericalism, and communism — it is the danger of mediocrity-rule. What do we mean by mediocre? Mediocre man is a half-person, indifferent, apathetic, less than is usual. He is the man who fears combative originality, who fears energetic initiative, who is horrified by absorbing passions, by efforts which consume one, by the spontaneity that exalts, the adventure that forges character, he unforeseen quickness of intuition and perception. Mediocre is the man who is not moved neither by the forces that rise him up nor by those that degrade him; who accepts in good faith being a face in the crowd or an agitator, in such a way that his mentality does not rise above that of the others, accepting as a brother or sister anyone who doesn’t scare him with ardor of temperament or originality of understandings. Mediocre man is always ready to enlist, to enroll, to jump on the bandwagon, as long as no overcomplicated measures are necessary. He is ready to participate in every effort destined to improve his lot, but only if those don’t require him to reflect or cooperate ostensibly. He is not very virtuous, and he is modestly vicious. He is mediocre in everything and of everything mediocre.

Critical activity

Don’t be misled — anarchist individualists are negators, destroyers, demolishers.

They are those who believe in nothing, and respect nothing — nothing, really, is safe from their all-encompassing critique. Nothing is sacred for them.

When should one criticize?

At every moment. There is not a single historical event that didn't arouse critique — there is not a single suffering, no pain, and no torment that hasn't given rise to criticism. Every human drama offers material for critique.

Where should one criticize? Everywhere.

How should one criticize? Enthusiastically. Courageously, vigorously. With sincerity. The individualist criticizes as if the possibility that at that instant everyone around him were to become an anarchist individualist depended on his action or inaction. Without worrying about the failures of those who preceded him, of their errors, of their inanity. With the hope and conviction that the result he will obtain will be worth more tomorrow than today.

With what means?

With thousands of means. By all means. With words, writings, action. With newspapers, pamphlets, books. With discussion, conferences, confrontations. With a life lived refracting. With a marginal existence lived as an example.

Why criticize?

Not because of dilettantism or arrogance. Not to gain followers and disciples. Not to make one's self a number or others into numbers. To make a clean slate. And once they are released, once they are freed, once they are placed in the mind, reason and feeling vibrate at will and it remains to each of us to build our own conception of life, complete it, and fabricate one's own interior City.

To enjoy physically.

I want to live. To live means to appreciate life. Individually. That's the only reason I feel myself to live by means of my senses. Through them: through my brain, my eyes, my hands, I conceive of the exterior world. I only feel myself to live physically, materially. The grey matter that fills my skull is material. My muscles, my nerves, my veins, my flesh are material. Joy and pain, emotions, sensual, olfactory, tasted, mental pleasures, either augment or restrict the functioning of my essential organs. There is nothing in all of this that is not actual, natural, tangible, even measurable.

I have no other ideal besides the full physical and material enjoyment of life. I do not classify pleasures as superior or inferior, good or bad, useful or harmful, favorable or inconvenient. The ones that make me love life more are useful. The ones that make me hate it or depreciate it are harmful. Favorable are the enjoyments that make me feel like I'm living more fully, unfavorable those that contribute to the shrinking of my feeling of being alive.

I feel myself to be a slave as long as I consent to others judging my passions. Not because I'm not really passionate, but because I want to flesh out my passions and impassion my flesh.

Sensual life. Amorous Camaraderie.

Why do the bees fatten up their queens in such a way that we only do for our opera singers? This is a question that deserves to be contemplated.

Bernard Shaw. *Man And Superman*, 1946.

Considerations on the idea of freedom

Before putting forth the anarchist individualist perspective on the sexual question, it is necessary for us to clarify what we mean by the expression, “freedom”. It is known that freedom cannot be an end, since there is no absolute freedom, like there is no general truth, practically speaking. Only individual, particular freedoms exist. It is impossible to escape certain contingencies. One cannot be free, for instance, from breathing, from taking things in, from being unique. Freedom, like truth, purity, goodness, equality, is nothing but an abstraction. And an abstraction cannot be a goal.

Considering, on the contrary, that from a particular point of view, freedom is understandable when it is not an abstraction, when there are means of achieving it, when one takes the road towards it. In this sense that the freedom to think, to be able to conceive of and do things without exterior obstacles in the way, to express through words or writing one’s thoughts as they take form before the spirit, makes sense.

This is precisely why only particular freedoms exist in possibility; leaving the domain of the abstract, placing ourselves on solid ground, we can affirm that “our needs and our desires” — more than our “rights”, an abstract and arbitrary expression — have been refused us, mutilated or covered up by authorities of various kinds.

Intellectual life, artistic life, economic life, sexual life — the individualists demand the freedom for these things to manifest themselves fully, according to individuals, to the tune of their freedom, outside of the legalist conceptions, and of the religious or civil prejudices. They demand, considering them to be like great rivers from which human activity floods, that they be free to flow in their own direction without being dammed up by moralism or traditionalism. Even further, that they not be hindered by impetuous error, by over tensed nerves, by backwards impulses. Between life in the free air, and the life in the shop front, we choose life in freedom.

What is love?

Love is one of the aspects of life, and the most difficult to define, because the perspectives from which it can be considered are very diverse. Sometimes the satisfaction of sexual necessity, an emotion, a sensation that escapes one’s comprehension is called “love”, and other times a feeling that comes from the spiritual necessity for intimate and affectionate camaraderie, from a profound and persistent friendship is called “love”. Other times, beyond all this, it is even a reflexive

act of will whose consequences have presumably been pondered. Love is also an experience of personal life: here and there we find impulsive experiences, pure caprices, and experiences that can last for many years or for the entirety of life.

Although love does not escape analysis any more than the other domains of human activity, its analysis presents more difficulties. Love is found “beyond good and evil”. Some paint it as the “child of Bohemianism”, others attribute “reasons that reason ignores” to it, many consider it “stronger than death”. It is, essentially, of an individual nature. If it is feeling, it is also passion. Whenever a person lives his or her life in an affectively intense manner — whether this intensity comes from feeling or passion — it influences his or her character, awakens spirit, is conducive to “heroism”, but also brings along in the same way feelings of dismay, sadness, and gloomy anxiety. If reasoning and will can, in certain cases, channel the development of these feelings, they do not take away love’s characteristic sentiment and passion.

The way things are, humanity is made up of beings of different sexes whose coming together is indispensable for the perpetuation of the human race.

Until sexless people (they would hope) can be created in biological labs, this indispensability will continue, and since that dawn of that day will take a long time to come, it will be necessary to speak of human differences of this sort.

But not only is the continuation of the human species linked to the attraction of people of both sexes, nature has it that the two sexes are attracted mutually, and that the sexual act be the fount of a voluptuous happiness that depraved asceticism and farcical Puritanism would like to dishonor or stain with infamy. They will never come, however, to considering it an unhealthy act, since it forms a part of human nature.

The fact itself that procreating can be voluntary and that its exercise can be the consequence of the woman’s free choice does not suppress sexual attraction in any way.

The sexes are attracted to each other, seek each other out, naturally, normally — this is the original, primordial fact, the fundamental basis of the relations between the two halves of the human race.

On the other hand, it is insane to try to reduce love to an equation or to limit it to one form of expression. Those who attempt this will find right away that they’ve been walking the wrong road. The amorous experience knows no borders, no limits. It varies from individual to individual.

The social environment and sexual relations.

Sensual, sentimental, or affective, a great duplicity is imposed on sexual relations. The legal kind of love is for many people the only they know; that is, the life-long union of two beings who usually didn’t know each other so well before their “marriage”, who in their flirting and relationship before the marriage and into it usually hide their true character, and, in spite of the possibility of divorce, tend to have a hard time separating without grave social or economic inconvenience.

Free union itself is only very slightly different from marriage when it accommodates itself to custom. As regards convenience, a great number of people who are naturally ‘changeable’ or ‘unstable’ have to appear to be ‘constant’ or ‘stable’. From thence results that people live together and end up suffering real tortures and the awkward ‘comfort’ of domestic hypocrisy. It ends up that the two refine their superficialities together, trying to hide from each other their

real temperament, and bringing up intrigues that require a permanent lie. This all results in the reduction of people's character, and generally of personality.

Is there anything less normal than the practical consequences, in the life of some women, of such conceptions as chastity and sexual purity? The infamy, accepted by all, that tolerates two sexual moralities, one for women and other for men? Is there anywhere women are more enslaved, where she is made more ignorant and placed more brutally beneath a yoke?

All legal and obligatorily constituted societies can only be hostile to irregular loves. To consider the normal expression of love, natural sexual attraction, it is necessary that the preoccupation for individual anatomy predominate over all other things.

To slave-love, the only kind of love that authoritarian societies can tolerate, the anarchist individualist opposes free love. To sexual dependency, that is, to the dominant concept demanding that the woman be mostly nothing but pleasure-meat, the individualist opposes sexual freedom, in other words, the freedom for every individual, of both sexes, to have their sexual life under their own control, to determine it according to their desires and the aspirations of their sensual or sentimental temperament.

Theory of sexual freedom

When anarchist individualists demand sexual freedom, what do they mean? Is it "freedom to rape" or of deprivation, that they want? Do they hope for the extermination of all feeling in amorous matters, the disappearance of tenderness or of affection? Do they glorify, perhaps, heedless promiscuity, or bestial sexual satisfaction? No. We simply want that every individual should have the right to dispose of their sexual life according to their own whim, and in all of the circumstances of that life — according to one's own temperament, sentiment, or reason. Attention: this means one's own sexual life, not that of others. We do not demand sexual freedom without sex education. We on the contrary believe that, gradually, in the period preceding puberty, human beings should ignore nothing concerning sex life — in other words, the unavoidable attraction of the sexes — whether considered in its sentimental, emotional, or physiological aspects.

So, "Freedom of sexual life" is not a synonym of "perversion" or of "loss of sexual sensibility". Sexual freedom is exclusively of an individual order. It presupposes an education of the will that would permit each to determine for himself or herself the point at which one is no longer in control of one's passions or inclinations, an education which perhaps would show itself to be much more instinctive than it seems at first glimpse. Like all freedoms, sexual freedom requires effort — not that of abstinence; abstinence is a proof of moral dissatisfaction, in the same way as deprivation is a sign of moral weakness — but of judgment, of discretion, of classification. In other words, it is not a question of the quantity or number of experiences, but of the quality of the experimenter. To conclude. The freedom of sexual life remains united, in the individualist sense, with preparatory sexual education and the power of individual determination. Julio Guesde wrote in 1873 that "sexual relations between women and men, founded upon love or mutual sympathy, will then become as free, as varied, and as multiplied as the intellectual and moral relations between people of the same or different sex." We, realists, actualists, affirm that thesis; that sexual relations between men and women (except those which individual temperament bars) can right now become as free, as variable, as multiplied as intellectual or moral relations between humans are, or should be.

Sexual education.

We believe that the truly advanced spirits of an age are the emancipators of that age, and that they should concern themselves with becoming educated by the best sex-educators available; they should never let a chance to propagate and affirm the importance of sexual education go by. A human being should know not only what delights — sentimental, emotional, physical — are reserved for us by sexual life, but also what responsibilities it implies. A serious sexual education would not ignore the problem of making procreation voluntary, nor would it ignore the thesis that “it is the woman’s choice when she will conceive.” Or even that “extreme” opinion that “society should allow women to choose to abort her children or to give them over to the collective for them to raise them.” It would also treat the subject of prophylactics and other precautions one should take to avoid the fearsome effects of venereal disease. The propaganda of the freedom of love is indispensable for bringing each individual to serious reflection about the negative effects of these diseases, to consciousness of their symptoms, information too often left to mystery or treated too lightly.

The individualists do not separate “freedom of sexual life” from “sexual education”. And it is important that those that know teach those that don’t. It is an elementary responsibility.

Contrary to the prejudices of a religious or civil order, the individualists consider the question of sexual relations in the same way as they would treat any question. They do not exclude sexual voluptuousness from the experience of life as a whole: they place it on the same level as intellectual (artistic, literary, etc.), or even moral, or economic voluptuousness.

When the individualist anarchists demand freedom of sexual life — in all circumstances, inside as well as outside of marriage — they do not pronounce themselves to be in favor of nor against monogamy or polyamory. To dogmatically support the one or the other is equally anti-individualist.

The individualists ask that the amorous experience not be qualified as more or less legitimate, as superior or inferior, whether it be simple or plural. They demand that all beings instruct themselves on all these things, and that neither fathers, mothers, nor fellows take advantage of their privileged situation to keep them hidden from those who trust them and place their confidence (by the familial obligation or otherwise) in them. To each person belongs the right to determine his or her sexual life as it pleases them, to vary their experiences or to remain with a single partner; in other words ‘to do as they please’.

Making affective phenomena penetrate into everyday life-experience is not a way for the individualists to diminish the importance of the ‘love’ factor in the evolution of human existence.

We would save ourselves certain disillusionments and revulsions if we were to make certain facts of life, instead of considering them definitive, to appear temporary, modifiable, revisable; essentially variable. This, which is already accepted from a scientific and intellectual point of view, is often not accepted from the sentimental, affective, or sexual point of view; we don’t know why. Moreover, it is not enough to accept this idea hypocritically and practice it clandestinely. The individualists demand the searching out and practice of “sexual freedom”, and demand for it the same publicity as is given to the other “freedoms”, convinced that its development and evolution are connected not only to the growth of individual and collective loyalty, but to a great extent as well to the disappearance of the authoritarian regime.

The emancipation of feelings

Sentimental emancipation consists, from our point of view, not in negating, inferiorizing, or devaluing feelings, but in putting them where they belong — on the physical, physiological plane. In all walks of life there are people inclined, instead, to put their feelings (their sexual or amorous sympathies) on a metaphysical plane. Conveniently, the individualist has been emancipated from this illusion. Feelings, sentiments, are experienced perceptions, those perceptions that the self, in the presence of other not-I beings — the intuitive and sentimental self, the sexual self if you please — The sentimental impression that one or various not-“I”’s produce might be more or less impulsive, alive, powerful, marked, durable: this impression is not rustic nor inexplicable; it can be perfectly well elucidated, reasoned, analyzed. It is a manifestation of the senses like the rest; it is not more nor less moral — it is, simply, “beyond good and evil.”

Sentiment is of an individual nature, but it is susceptible to education, to conversation, to intensive and extensive acculturation, like everything that is part of the domain of the senses, everything that pushes sensibility forth. One might wish to be more sentimental than one is, and this can be achieved, in the same way as one can come, through the appropriate care, to make a tree or the land produce more beautiful fruits, or larger thorns. One can, by looking carefully, learn to be a good lover, to be tender, affectionate, caring, as one can learn to be a sailor or a speaker of a foreign language. It is certainly a question of temperament, but it is also a question of will; of reflection, of the search for personal tastes.

Thus, from the sentimental point of view, everything is liberated that makes sentiments fall into place, into the manifestations of individual sensibility, between the products of the personality’s vital constitution. Everything, sentimentally speaking, is liberated that considers feelings to be a susceptible product — like all the products of human sensibility — of development, intensification, improvement, or vice-versa.

The Break-up

The words, ALWAYS and NEVER, have too dogmatic an appearance to make up a part of the individualist’s vocabulary.

The experience of amorous camaraderie begins at the moment when two beings like each other; if not in detail, at least a *grosso modo*. Generally this happens without anyone worrying about the future, and it can also happen after a long period of reflection. It can take place when one loves in general, and the other desires in particular. From the moment when one of the participants declares, beforehand, that they don’t consider the amorous experience a caprice, the experiment goes on, until it is ascertained whether both are in agreement. Amongst ourselves, we find that we have too much scientific spirit about us to draw any conclusions from fortuitous encounters. We know perfectly well that, in the same way as the swallow’s song doesn’t make the spring, neither can one or two hours of love reveal everything the people involved are capable of manifesting.

Theoretically, the amorous experience might last an hour, a day, or ten years. It can last for an instant or it can go on for the whole duration of a person’s life. Practically, it ends when those who lived it agree to put an end to it, or when whoever announces his or her desire to interrupt it gets the sincere agreement of his or her co-experimenter. To impose the breakup of

an amorous experience on a fellow human being is an act of authority (voluntary or not), as it is also an act of authority to impose an end to living together. To make someone accept an amorous rupture requires a refined tact, an extreme delicateness, requires taking various precautions. Perverse words, malevolent insinuations, bitter reproaches — these are weapons which anarchist individualists refuse to use. Their greatest worry is to avoid the suffering of those they want to leave behind. The practice of polyamory permits the prolongation of the amorous experience and avoids all brusqueness. In any event, in that case it is always between comrades that one puts an end to an amorous experience: without offending, sweetly; between comrades disposed towards starting again tomorrow, as the case may be. Amongst us no experience, of any kind, ends definitively.

People with an inconsistent nature, if they declare themselves right away, give those who fear suffering an opportunity to know how to behave, to know what they can believe in. If this clarity exists, there is no possibility of concealing, of fraud, or of deception. A comrade may, for instance, love a certain person, A, with the intention of prolonging the amorous experience and of living together, and also love another person, B, with the same spirit, but without living with them, and also love C and D on a pure whim. What is most important is that all intentions are made clear.

If, for individualists, to impose a breakup in amorous matters can be considered a function of the conservation of one's independence or personality, that rupture nevertheless cannot compromise the comrade it is imposed upon. Some individualists end up saying that s/he who desires the separation must make sure that the other will have found an equivalent to make up for the loss, or, on the contrary, to get them one. The method of equivalency, they say, is the only scientific one; they say it responds to the idea of energy-sharing and compensation. For them the road of arbitrary desire is closed — without it, the compensatory element bubbles up in "reprisals" and vengeance, inadmissible between good comrades.

This said, it is clear that, in the final analysis, imposing a breakup ought to end up comfortable. But not everyone reacts in the same way. Some accept the situation without objecting and others feel pushed to present and make the considerations of their particular nature heard. These others may be thinking that their loved one is under the influence of some foreign or retrograde energy. The individualist can defend his cause to the comrade, and the comrade will listen to those arguments, examining whether the former is capable of changing their mind. The individualist can make an effort to persuade; if pushed by determinism, insisting, as he does with his daily propaganda, upon drawing others to the ideas he professes. And we must not alienate ourselves from this insistence.

But in no case will individualists who want to impose a breakup and those who oppose it resort to legal sanction or physical violence. The employment of these means would exclude them *ipso facto* from anarchist individualism.

Lemon Drops (Aphorisms)

Up till 9:15, you found the person with whom you had been living for such a long time to be gifted with all kinds of unrivalled attributes and qualities; listening to them one would say that they were the incarnation of an ideal, almost an angel sent from heaven to accompany you and make your earthly existence tolerable. At 9:20 you find out that this unique, extraordinary person, this perfection of perfections, has slept with someone else; yesterday, or last week, or a month ago, or 6 months ago, or a year ago. At 9:25 — you'll have needed five minutes to become yourself again — this perfection of perfections has become a monster in your eyes, perhaps the most repugnant monster the earth has ever been home to. Their presence becomes suddenly odious, and to deal with the news you see no other recourse than to abandon forever the roof under which you've lived so many hours of affliction and enjoyment together.

I don't know what reasons of moral order — lay, juridical, or religious — you might be basing your actions on, but in my eyes I declare frankly that I can only conceive of your conduct as dictated by one of three motives — ignorance, cruelty, or dementia. Alright, well, I don't want the company of ignorant, cruel, or demented people.

I will be cynical. I maintain that if sexual impudence — which has nothing to do with sexual freedom — were universal, it would produce no more evils and miseries than the present manner of conceiving of marriage.

The bourgeois denounces us for being partisans of sexual freedom. We are called indifferent, insensible, immune to the pain or hassle resulting from not being able to keep emotions inside, from mistakes, from ruptures, from separations. And this is not really to have known or understood us at all. Although we have to deal with the most atrocious suffering, with being sentimentally crucified, we do not want dictatorship in matters of love, nor do we want them in political, economic, moral, or intellectual matters. We don't accept, in the world of love, the dominion of men over women, nor the dominion of women over men.

In speaking of associationism or of camaraderie in intellectual economic, scientific, or recreational questions, all the anarchists, or each one of them, presents his projects, plans, and suggestions. When it is a question of associationism in sexual matters or of amorous camaraderie, the assembled seem distressed; the men look at us as they would look at an importune invader, and the women as though we were depraved.

Nationalism, chauvinism, or patriotism, bellicosity, exploitation, and domination are found rooted in jealousy, in accumulation, in amorous exclusiveness, in conjugal fidelity. Sexual morality always makes use of the retrograde parties, of social conservatism. Moralism and authoritarianism are tied to each other like ivy to an oak-tree.

It's not that I want the death of love, but rather I am afraid of dead love. To this I oppose living love, which breaks the chains of prejudice, tears off the masks of pride, and leaves disdainfully; that love which is above good and evil, unbridled love, flowing and unhindered, drunken, aphrodisiac love, equal and plural, generous love that no one denies. I oppose it to the pallid, coarse, limited, scarce, prudish love, ignorant of passion and adventure, that is glued to the love for one

person alone like a snail is glued to its shell, a stingy love that does not give itself because it can offer so little.

Certain people, respectable in matters of anarchy, have looked at each other upon meeting and whispered: pornographer. The pornographers, friends of mine, are people who cannot hear talk of sexualism, cannot read an erotic description, or feel themselves around a desire for love without being disgusted by it, without feeling a repulsion. The pornographers are those who feel assaulted in their insides when they see the shining back of a neck, a softly beating throat, a fine skin, a curved hip; it makes their blood boil.

The pornographers are those who believe themselves to be in the empire of sin when a vision of luxury passes before their eyes. Ah, the poor impure ones! Ah, the slaves!

The couple that ignores “lateral loves” ends up undergoing mutual influence in the way they see things, the way they feel; even reproducing each others’ manias. Here individuality disappears, personalities are overwhelmed, and both in the couple end up without individual initiative. They end up afraid of experience for its own sake to such an extent that, though they may even call themselves anarchists, their lives hardly differ from those of the most antiquated social conservatives.

For me, the primordial question is that of knowing: does not propaganda in favor of amorous pluralism, of the conquest of the faculty of plural love, in its triple form, intellectual, sentimental and carnal — does not that propaganda value human unity? If an individual lets himself or herself know others more intimately, and allows others to know them more intimately, don’t they glow more brightly, live with more intensity; doesn’t he or she appreciate with more looseness and freeness of spirit the energies of his or her comrades, doesn’t she become less poor, less curt, less stingy in the contact with others that determines his or her everyday life? That is what interests me as a bringer of anarchy, convinced that sentimental poverty, the indigence of amorous luster, and conjugal dogmatism constitute excellent fields of operation in which to plant the seeds of truth in orthodox or archist spirits.

I don’t know why the search for a sentimental pleasure for the satisfaction that it can provide, the refinements of amorous enjoyment for the delight that they can dispense to us, are considered by some individualists (!) as less pure, less elevated, and even less noble than the journey through intellectual pleasure for the cerebral contentment that it can proportion. I don’t understand how an anarchist could bring himself to compose a hierarchical list of the different enjoyments: cataloguing this gesture, cataloguing such and such a body part as dignified or undignified. Without a doubt I am a great “pervert” — at least I’m not greatly “pure” — but I cannot see the least qualitative difference between the cheek or buttocks of a man or a woman. I do not understand, then, why it must be “good”, for anarchists to uncover the cheeks, and “bad” to unclothe buttocks.

I don’t understand why amongst some anarchists the pleasure that one experiences listening to beautiful music is considered “elevated” and why the pleasure through which we enjoy feeling flesh tremble at the touch of our kisses is considered “low”. How can one have an anarchist concept of life and at the same time construct a hierarchy of the sensations? I cannot bring myself to understand that.

What do I mean by amorous camaraderie? A concept of voluntary association that encompasses amorous manifestations, passionate and voluptuous gestures. It is a more complete understanding of comradeship than that which only brings intellectual or economic camaraderie. We do not say that amorous camaraderie is a more elevated, more noble, or more pure form; we

simply say that is a more complete form of comradeship. Every camaraderie that is comprised of three is, say what you will, more complete than those comprised solely of two.

Individualists, materialist and determinist anarchists, say or write that to go beyond enjoyment for enjoyment's sake and pleasure for its own sake, is an equivocation, an illusion. I expect nothing after I die, I will say it again, and I don't consider it an equivocation nor an illusion to contemplate, at the edge of the ocean, to hear the murmurs of the city, in an orchard, to crunch apples in my teeth. I don't consider it an illusion nor a rip-off to feel the pressure of a woman's lips against mine. My life is too short — like yours — for me to renounce at the moment the occasion presents itself for me to enjoy someone who offers themselves to me, or to provoke the opportunity if it were necessary.

I hear people saying that monogamy is superior to any other kind of sexual union. Different, yes; superior, no. History shows us that non-monogamous peoples are in no way inferior, as far as science or literature, to the monogamous ones. The Greeks were dissolute, incestuous, homosexuals, and they praised courtesanship. Look at the artistic and philosophical works they created. Compare the architectural and scientific production of the polygamous Arabs with the ignorance and crudeness of the monogamous Christians of the same era. Moreover, it is not certain, as is presumed, that monogamy or monandry are natural. On the contrary, they are artificial. Wherever archism does not intervene or punish quickly with its typical severity (archism, that is the law and police) there is an impulse towards sexual promiscuity. Take a look at the saturnal and floral bacchanals of Antiquity — carnivalesques; medieval festivals; Flemish kermises; the erotic clubs of the century of the encyclopedists — contemporary open-air dances. They are reactions; and you can like me or not, but they are reactions in the end. What's happening is that humans have a very hard time putting up with subjection to monogamy and monandry, and that kind of sexual union is only so on the outside, in appearances. That's the truth.

I do not deny — no one has denied it — that monogamy works for certain — let's say many — temperaments. But based on the studies that I've made of these questions, I proclaim anyway that monogamy and monandry impoverish sentimental personality, narrow the analytic horizon and restrict the range of possibilities for involvement with different people.

To practice "amorous camaraderie" means, for me, to be a more intimate comrade, a more complete, and closer one. And by the mere act of being connected through the practice of amorous camaraderie to your lover, you will be, for me, a closer, more alter ego, more loved comrade. I intend, furthermore, to help myself to sexual attractions like I would in a panacea of more ample, more accentuated friendship. I have never said that this ethic was within the reach of all mentalities.

We are told that it is necessary to indicate at which port the individualist anarchist must drop anchor when he launches himself into the ocean of the diversity of the forms of sentimental or sexual life. The individualist anarchist milieu of which I am a part holds another point of view. We think that it is a posteriori and not a priori — according to experience, comparison, personal investigation — that the individualist must decide to go in for one kind of sexual life or another. Our initiative and criteria exist in order that we might help ourselves to them without allowing ourselves to be diminished by the diversity or plurality of our experiences. Attempts, tests, and adventures don't scare us. To set out on this path brings risks that must be calculated, we must look ahead straight and clear before getting on the boat. Once we are floating on the sea, we will know where the wind is pushing us; the essential part is that we must fix our eyes well upon the dark storm in order to end up with the clearest lucidity, always apt to take stock of the situations

we're in. To figure out where we're at. We consider life to be an experience, and we want that experience for its own sake.

Greater Evils

Chastity

It's worth the hassle to analyze the prejudice of chastity, because of the support it gives to the statist and authoritarian concept of the present social conditions. I call chastity a "prejudice" because looking at it from the point of view of reason and biological hygiene, it is absurd that a man or woman should impose a silence on the functioning of a part of his or her organism, renounce the pleasures or gestures that this functioning can bring about, or refuse the most natural necessity. From this point of view one can daringly affirm that the practice of chastity, the observance of sexual abstinence, is an abnormality, an expedient counter to nature.

In a now-extinct English review, "The Free Review", a woman, Hope Clare, described in surprising terms the consequences of chastity upon the health of the feminine element of humanity.

"Daily, proofs are given to us of the physical evils that a long or constant virginity causes. Disuse debilitates, and mutates every organ. Only the perverted constituents of civilizations-in-decline refuse to exercise their sexual functions... The primitives are in this respect much more sensible than the civilized. Nature punishes abuse as well as abstinence with the same rigor. Is the matter really an impartial one? A profligate person can have a long career of intemperance without his or her health really suffering much, but a virgin does not escape inconvenience so easily. Neurotic hysterics, the most widely-known expression of this chronic sickness, is the near-unavoidable result of absolute celibacy. It is found with a good deal more frequency in women than in men, and the most expert specialists are agreed that, nine times out of ten, abstinence is the first cause of this affliction. Menstruation, which is of such importance in the life of a woman, does not happen without perturbation amongst virgins. Very occasionally it happens accompanied by suffering. The deep disarray which the health of many single women suffers has no other reason for existence, and it ends up causing very grave inflammations of the reproductive organs. The state of the celibate person is morbid, their bodies are predisposed towards sickness and suffering. Anemia, chlorosis — these are the results of continuous virginity. Every day one walks down the street beside these victims of this violation of nature; they are easy to recognize because of their pallid and yellowed faces, their sunken eyes, their cold look, their phlegmatic step, their rigidity. They could be likened to flowers wilted prematurely for lack of life-giving sunlight, but if they would bloom if only they were transported to an atmosphere of love."

These lines justify fully the qualitative of "prejudice" which I apply to chastity. This can be examined from a religious as well as from a civil point of view.

The religious people of ancient days consecrated with the cult of their gods a certain number of priests and priestesses that would vote as to people having sexual relations or not, and the violation of their command was punished by other sanctions. It is evident that the important position that amorous life occupies in the lives of people distances them from the "duties" they are supposed to have to Divinity, and creates obligations and distractions that run contrary to the cultish behavior that these religious entities impose upon their creatures. The natural always

disgusts the spiritual, the physical annoys the metaphysician. That's why the mystics consider sexual gestures and love in general as though it brought with it an element of the impure, because "sin" — the sin par excellence — makes the divine come down into the human, establishing heaven on earth. This idea comes to its apogee above all Christianity. Sexual, carnal love, is the sin, and as such it is displeasing to the sanctity of the Divinity. Moreover, the founder, supposed or real, of Christianity, was celibate, or at least is presented to us as such. The apostle saint Paul, that great Christian propagandist, saw quite clearly that, as a last resort, it is better to cede to the sexual impulse, that is, to get married, than to "embrace" or "lay with" people. But in the eyes of God, the state of virginity is recommended highest. As it is necessary to give a place to "the working of the flesh", though it only be to assure the prolongation of that mutant form of love called "marriage only", it was also necessary to make marriage into a sacrament, the union of two bodies and souls to a certain moment, a union based in the perpetual vote of sexual fidelity, blessed by the earthly representatives of God, and having procreation as its unique goal.

The civil conception of marriage is a lay translation of a religious idea. The state official of civil matters exercises no more than the simple function of lay priest. The citizen, theoretically, must remain chaste until the magistrate has sanctioned his or her sexual relations by means of marriage. If he or she proceeds in a different way, he or she is chastised by the public, and receives the condescension of straight society, especially if it's a girl. The State has, in effect, a big interest in making sure that sexual relations have as a corollary the establishment of the family, because this is the reduced image of authoritarian society. Authorized by laws, the fathers impose a contract on the beings they have caused to be brought into the world — without consulting them — a contract the terms of which may not be discussed, and which contain the germ of the whole social contract; it is in the family that the child learns to obey without discussion, without critique, which makes it necessary to be content with evasive responses or without any response at all when he or she asks for any kind of explanation; it is in the family that interest in becoming a good schoolboy, a good soldier, a good worker, a good citizen, is inculcated in the child's mind. When this child leaves the family to found a new one, he already has all the qualities required to be dominated or to dominate, to be exploited or to exploit. That is to say, to be a good supporter of the state.

Now then, the chastity that women have been kept in, and in which they have kept themselves, has predisposed them admirably towards playing their role of good mother, good teacher, good citizen. From the moment, however, that nature is about to undermine or put the artificial in danger, she must renounce nature and subject herself to the artificial. This is the result of the practice of chastity in women.

There where the prejudice of chastity has disappeared, in individuals as well as collectively, the other unnatural prejudices upon which social conventions rest will not take long to crumble. Prostitution would end too if the social ambiance didn't find it necessary to devote a more or less large part of its population to satisfying abnormal existences.

Jealousy

Emotions are subject to sicknesses, in the same way as all faculties or functions which are exhausted or damaged. Indigestion is a sickness of nutritive function brought to excess. Tiredness is overwork produced by exercise. Pulmonary consumption is the sickness of injured lungs. Sac-

rifice is the amplification of abnegation. Hatred is at times a sickness of love. Jealousy is another one.

Jealousy has many faces. There are jealousies of property. They come from a sickness of legalized love, sanctioned or not by the code. One of the conjugal partners considers the other as "his or her property" or his "thing", a "custom" out of which they cannot escape. And cannot conceive that "their thing" might pull back, nor that their power over them might be taken away. This kind of jealousy can get complicated because of the influence of a wounded self-love, or become aggravated beneath the weight of economic constraints.

There are "jealousies of sensuality" when one of the participants in the amorous experience finds themselves "diminished" by the end of the amorous relations that linked them with the person who has fallen away but who they still love. Complicated by desire, suffering grows in the face of the knowledge that a third enjoys the pleasures that this sick person had reserved for themselves.

"Emotional jealousies" also exist, which proceed from a feeling of decreased intimacy, a shrinking of friendship, or a weakening of the same. Whether or not the eclipse of affection given by the loved one is explainable, the person in question feels that the love he or she was the object of is decreasing, becoming ill, and threatening to end. Thus the moral and physical energies decrease proportionally. Their health is also altered in general.

Sensual or Emotional jealousies can be considered, as well, as a reaction of the instinct of conservation of amorous life against that which menaces its existence.

"Jealousies of property", which are not at all interesting from the anarchist individualist's perspective, are linked to the disappearance of the idea that a human being can belong to another, as if it were a question of a piece of furniture or some other object. "Sensual jealousies", in general, are cured when the patient finds another individual with whom he or she can relive emotions or sensations that are more or less similar to those which he or she lost with the person left behind.

Certain facts demonstrate that "emotional jealousies" are hard to cure, and are sometimes incurable. It has happened many times that a person receives such a blow from an amorous disillusionment that the whole rest of their life is altered. I have known men who had built their whole emotional life on a particular affection, and who, having lost it, have ended up feeling so down and out that they've killed themselves.

Individualists do not deny jealousy any more than they do the flu. But if it is true that sexual experiences differ from one another, how can jealousies — a morbid form of love more than a sickness of it — how can they exist? Can an individual, whether the subject or the object of an amorous experience, really and sincerely think that he or she lacks the qualities and necessary attributes to attract another similar love? The emotional experience is one thing, and the sensual experience another; and selecting someone to procreate with is even another. It may come to pass that the man with whom a woman chooses to procreate may not be the one she feels the greatest affection for, and that she searches in him for certain physical qualities to which she is indifferent in another man. Can the one really reasonably be jealous of the other?

Can it be affirmed that, in women, jealousy is a proof of love? Is it not, on the contrary, the result of centuries upon centuries when priests and legislators continuously repeated to us that woman is destined to be the possession or the object of a man, that he should, conversely, be entirely hers as well, and that she was indebted to her owner and prohibited from having two people?

If it is true that the fire of love, once it is put out, cannot be reignited, it cannot be denied that there is no hardness, and even cruelty, in the abandonment, to isolation and pain, of a human being that sincerely loves you and for whom there was reason to believe retribution in emotions would be due. Almost every time — when it is a question of conscious people's involvements — when reflection and will are made to intervene in affectionate experiences, almost every time a serious, honest explanation is given, the causes of the sickness disappear.

When love has really disappeared, the cure is obtained through reasoning more than through pity. Pity — which must not be confused with benevolence — is one of those uncertain and equivocal remedies that, rather than curing these sicknesses, perpetuate them.

Quite frequently we find, in society, disgraceful people that take recourse to violence or to intimidation in an attempt to keep the love of those they claim to love. It is fitting to ask what can be left of an affectionate love that prolongs itself beneath the threat of the revolver. I cannot understand what a person thinks he or she is going to gain by killing the person they love. Unpremeditated, it is an act of insanity; premeditated, it is an act of vengeance. Above all, in questions of love, vengeance is a vile, low act.

Responding to people who are “convinced of their jealousy”, who affirm that jealousy is a function of love, the individualists remind them that love, in its most elevated sense, can also consist in “desiring, above all else, the happiness of the loved person”, in finding “their own happiness in the maximum realization of the personality of the object of love.” This thought, in those who share it and cultivate it, almost always ends in creating a cure for “emotional jealousies”.

Behind it all is the fear that these diverse emotions are mere palliatives and cannot cure the sickness but superficially. In love, like in all the rest, abundance is what annihilates jealousy and envy. This is why the formula of love in freedom, everyone for everyone, is the preferred way of going about things for anarchists.

Flirting in love.

I am horrified by coquetry in love. I do not sympathize with the woman who, though she is desirous, lets herself be desired passively. A prolonged resistance freezes my blood and definitively pushes me away when maneuvers to mask the acuteness of the sexual necessity come into play. Neither ingenuity nor getting to know someone better are sufficient excuses for me. If respect and esteem were not in such great disuse, I would say the woman who gives herself is deserving more than anyone of them. Let her give herself, let her not deny or make a commodity of herself. Let her simply give herself. Without make-up, without playing a ruse, without calculations, without assumptions, without hidden goals. Without thinking about guarantees of ulterior fidelity. Without interrogating destiny. Without worrying if s/he goes back to another lover. Let he or she abandon him or herself, give his or her body. And not only his or her body, but his or her imperfections, passion, or sensibility. Without ostentation in contrast to the natural intimacy of love. But also without that puerile fear with respect to the good or bad opinions that his or her gift might generate. Giving oneself to another, because of love in general or desire in particular. To whomever one likes, to whomever likes one. Sometimes together, other times with different people. For an hour, a day, ten years. Without any selfish preoccupation with civil state or social condition. This is the character of a lover, of people who are really in love, who really love themselves. The flirt does not give herself, does not sell herself, does not make a commerce of herself,

but rather, simply exhibits herself. She is a cold lover. She is a mask, the counterfeit figure of a real lover. The coy woman is the antidote to love.

The bourgeois caricature of free love.

One can find a relatively good number of “bourgeois” that practice “free love”, or, rather, its caricature. Amongst them, this practice is accompanied by flirting, coquetry, and clever maneuvers designed to disguise the severity of their sexual need. Amongst them lies, appearances, calculated actions, and deceptions abound, and hidden intentions are cultivated. Money interests come into play when venality does not do so directly. “Free Love”, for them, is a synonym for “free prostitution”, and those who believe declarations of friendship or sympathy are paid in coin. A puerile fear in the face of the good or bad opinion that “giving” one’s body might result in manifests itself. Passion is filtered out, and emotion dispensed drop by drop; sensibility is distilled. People make themselves believe things that aren’t true. People promise themselves easily without having the slightest intention of doing what they promised, disillusionments cruelly follow after reasons for believing in illusions are given, the given word is taken away brutally after having allowed the other to believe in the supposed affection, and mischievously they play at offering themselves and taking it back. It even ends up sometimes that people will delight in the pain of those they torment and oppress with their refusal of love to them. In a word, they make each other suffer with the greatest indifference.

Obscenity, modesty, and sexual emancipation.

It is not strange to run into people with advanced ideas, readers of vanguardist newspapers or members of extremist organizations that would be scandalized if any talk of sexuality appeared therein, without the observation of certain precautions of language or style. For them, the genital organs are always “shameful” parts of the body. There is no real discussion of what the sexual act refers to or the pleasure that it stimulates and is stimulated by. They forget that without the attraction of voluptuousness they would not be in this world. “Cover that breast!”

The life of the senses plays a considerable role in people’s existence. Why ignore its influence? Why not concede to it, on the contrary, the place it belongs in? True sexual liberation consists in insisting on this point: sexual desires are natural things, and they lose the alien feel they typically end up characterized by when the experiences, satisfactions, and refinements to which they can be so conducive are spoken of and written about in full, clear light.

Obscenity consists in intrigue, in the “closed doors” that surround the varied manifestations of sexual life.

I can’t even conceive the possibility that there might be something unhealthy in contemplating the spectacle of the coupling of two beings, or of the caresses they give one another. It is no more harmful than contemplating a painting showing a laborer planting a field, or harvesters collecting grapes. What is unhealthy is the prejudice that would prefer that these spectacles be hidden beneath a veil and made to circulate clandestinely and furtively.

What is modesty, on the other hand? What is obscenity? The dictionary defines obscenity as what is contrary to modesty, and modesty as the feeling of fear or timidity that people have relative to sex. This particular definition goes on to say that obscenity is of a purely conventional

order, and that a book, a show, a recording, or a conversation loses all its obscene character when the person who reads, sees, perceives or hears it does not feel, in doing so, “neither fear, nor a feeling of timidity.”

So, obscenity does not reside in the object looked at, in the writing that is read, in the habits one has, in the words one uses, but, every time, is instead in the person looking at it, examining it, hearing it. There is no more obscenity in a volume detailing the amorous act or in clothing that lets certain parts of the body be seen, than there is in the spectacle of a turkey clucking around a farm or a poppy which rises up from a bed of flowers; there is no more obscenity in reading an algebra book or listening to an operetta.

In all fields of human behavior, expression and spectacle bring out desire. It is no more “obscene” to desire a woman whose dress lets one see a well-formed leg than to desire a box of chocolates, or to look hungrily at a tree bearing excellent fruit, or to install a henhouse after seeing an egg be laid. These are completely normal associations of ideas.

The curve of a waist, the tightness of a pantleg, the adhering of a swimsuit to the skin, and the nakedness of a human body have nothing reprehensible about them. Not only do I not feel any kind of repulsion, fear, or timidity about me when I see these things, but I have indeed never noticed the arising of such feelings in people of normal intelligence. I have found people who are not pleased by the absence of “modesty” in spectacles they witness, but I have never found anyone who could demonstrate to me that a spectacle or an expression are obscene in and of themselves.

Obscenity is a perception purely relative to the individual that feels him or herself to be hurt or scandalized by what they perceive. Objectively, obscenity does not exist outside of that individual, it does not exist in the same way as modesty does not exist. Dorine’s breast is not impudent, it is Tartuffe who sees impudence in it. Tartuffe is a hypocrite. Given the Jesuit mentality of our contemporary social environment, it can be inferred that 99 percent of those who censure or denounce with the greatest vehemence those lectures, spectacles, and gestures they consider “inappropriate” suffer no real “feeling of fear or timidity” before the thoughts those things might engender in them. They are hypocrites, like Tartuffe, their model.

Sexual stimulus is no worse than classical, mathematical, literary, or artistic stimuli. There is an infinity of books that discuss, with a profusion of details, the combinations and refinements that the practice of exact sciences and fine arts can give rise to. Why are there not oral and written courses in amorous voluptuousness, wherein all the great things that the practice of amorous relations can give rise to might be openly discussed and taught? Since these courses do not circulate *ad libitum*, the description of voluptuous practices is considered obscene. That’s the only reason.

The parasites

We find in life two kinds of people who repudiate effort; some for interest, some because they aren’t apt. The first are the “parasites” — those who do not work — that is, those who would like to live off the work of others, not so much because they are incapable of doing it themselves, but because it ends up more profitable for them, less tiring, to let themselves be lulled to sleep with sweet nothings. The parasite is not only someone who lives comfortably off collecting rents or off a fortunate inheritance; he is found in every part of life and in all areas of human activity.

He operates in all ambiances. Proteiform, he has a thousand different names: as a vagabond he might be a poet, an artist, a propagandist, a worker without work, a specialized worker who perhaps is very hard working. But one can be all these things without being a parasite in any way. That's why it's hard to unmask the parasite. With a little ability and clarity one can recognize the parasite; his work consists of plagiarized ideas, his activity and propaganda full of other people's work and banalities. The proletarian who takes advantage of the efforts of others to improve his own luck, who never takes an active part in the revolutionary struggle — let us not forget that he too is a parasite.

We admit that we are all a little parasitic. But in a general sense, what thing, what being on this earth is not a parasite on the Earth? And isn't planetary life in itself a kind of parasitism? We take advantage, clearly, of the conquests of our predecessors. We move about upon the bridges they constructed for us, we feed our brains with their ideas. If we limit ourselves to this, we are all nothing but vulgar parasites, and in that case we would do much better to just shut up and become recluses, hidden away in our nullity, instead of going about divulging, as though it were flour from our sack, things that others said before us and better than us. It is only upon the condition that we go beyond, that we continue the work of those who preceded us, at our own risk and danger, helping ourselves to their works and results as though these were signals that point the way to new struggles and experiences, that we cease to be parasites. Parasites abound in the world of production. Who could tell us the number of unused workers? And everyone who accepts and perpetuates — even as they condemn — the conditions of life in present society are not even the worst of the parasites — the worst are those who understand the necessity of making an effort and don't because they are afraid of the risks that go along with it.

Prostitution

On one of our postcards the following maxim is printed: "Prostitute your brain, your arm, or your groin, it's still prostitution and slavery." But this isn't a sexual apology. On the contrary. What it means is that the worker who lets himself be exploited muscularly or intellectually commits a logical error if he considers himself "morally" superior to the street whore who catches passing flesh hunters. Because whether we are hostile to or are in favor of modern exploitation, we perpetuate it too. Whether they be our mental, muscular or sexual faculties that we allow to be exploited, it is only a mere question of details. An exploited person is an exploited person; we are all to an extent exploited, and those who let themselves be exploited and are against exploitation are prostituting themselves. I do not see how the kept woman or the mistress is inferior in any way to those who are adversaries of exploitation and yet spend their whole day in front of a machine making machinelike gestures, or going around trying to find out if they can extract some profit for their bosses from a parochial group of merchants. Prostitution has little to do with the kind of work a person is doing; it is the fact that we are making a living through a process which is contrary to the opinions we profess, or which reinforces the regime we would like to combat.

A Full Life

Nudism

We have always considered nudism to be a revolutionary revindication. We must add that it is only as an individual means of emancipation that it interests us. This does not mean that we practice nudism as a therapeutic activity or that we are trying to get to a more “natural” state of things. From the individualist perspective, the practice of nudism is something more than a hygienic exercise or a more physical culture.

We consider the practice of nudism as:

An affirmation.

A protest.

A liberation.

An affirmation. To demand the freedom to live naked, to get naked, to walk around naked, to associate with other nudists without having any preoccupations upon discovering the body besides its resistance to temperature; it is to demand the right to totally determine for ourselves the disposition of our bodily individuality. Against social and religious institutions that insist that the use or abuse of the human body should be subordinate to the will of the legislator or the priest, the nudists’ demand is one of the most profound manifestations of individual freedom.

A protest. To demand and practice the freedom of nudity is to protest, in effect, against every dogma, law, or custom that establishes a hierarchy of body parts, that considers, for instance, that the exhibition of the face, the hands, the arms, the throat, is more respectable than to unclothe the buttocks, the breasts, or the stomach. It is to protest against the classification of the parts of the body as noble and ignoble — the nose, for instance, considered noble, and the penis summarily ignoble. It is to protest, in a more elevated sense, against all interventions (legal or not) that demand that “we must not oblige anyone” to strip off their clothes “if they don’t want to”, and that we be “obligated to wear clothes” if other people would like it that way!

A liberation. Liberation from clothing, from the subjection to wearing clothes which have never been nor could ever be anything but a hypocritical disguise, given that the importance shifts over to what covers the individual up — and consequently to what is “accessory” — and not to the body, whose culture, nevertheless, constitutes the essential part of life. Liberation from one of the principal notions upon which ideas of “permission”, “prohibition”, “good” and “evil”. Liberation from flirting, from passive acceptance of those artificial, gilded indicators, which maintain class-differences. To save one’s self from that prejudice of modesty which is always just “shame of the body”. To liberate one’s self from the obsession with “obscenity” that our social hypocrisy cultivates.

We hold that the practice of nudism is a kind of “better camaraderie”, of “less-scarce companionship”. A comrade, or a fellow, is less distant from us, more valuable to us, more intimate, simply because he or she gives him or herself to us in plain view without any subtle intellectual or ethical intentions, and moreover without any hiding of the body.

The detractors of nudism tell us that the sight of nudity or that to frequent nudist colonies consisting of people of both sexes is an exaltation of erotic desire. In reality, the erotic “exaltation” engendered by nudist activities is “pure, natural, and instinctive”, and it cannot be compared to the fictitious “excitation” produced by semi-nudism, the skimpiness of dresses and all the artifices of touch and makeup that the clothed (or half-clothed) society we find ourselves in makes use of.

Reciprocity

There is a method, the absolute application of which would repair, for those who would adopt it as a basis for their relations and agreements, any wound, prejudice, illusion, or economic trap; any diminution or injury to personal dignity — the method of reciprocity.

Predicated upon loyalty, in any field of human activity, the method of reciprocity implies equity, as much in the economic sphere as in that of customs, in the intellectual fields as well as in sentimental or emotional questions. In effect, there is nothing that can escape the effects of reciprocity. This is a way of behaving as regards other people that has a potential for truly universal irradiation. It is very simple to expound, because it consists in receiving the equivalent for what has been given, as much as regards the isolated individual as the associated one.

In exchange for the product of your effort, I offer you mine. You receive it and we stay on hand for each other. If, on the contrary, it does not satisfy you, if you don’t consider it equivalent to that which you’ve given, well, in that case every one keeps what’s theirs and we look for someone else with whom we might come to a better accord. In this way, none of us become debtors.

It will be objected that it is an aspect of that concession, reciprocity, that it ends up making a ferocious beast out of a man. For example, you may judge me, and you are in your right, but I will also judge you and will do so with the same weapons — don’t run away. Don’t hold back criticism from me, and I won’t be careful to keep mine from you; you have injured me, you have offended me, and I will offend you, I will do the same injury to you, or worse. You showed yourself to be cruel, merciless, inexorable, and I will react in the same way. So you see, we are not, and never will be, peers. Though it be practiced in all its crudeness, the method of reciprocity automatically reestablishes and affirms dignity, placing it on an indestructible pedestal.

Without a doubt, supported in reciprocity, relations and accords amongst men exclude deceit. Without a doubt, the method of reciprocity implies Thalion’s law, but it only works if, in every assessment, we put ourselves on an equal level with respect to our personal dignity. It is certain that we will discover ourselves and treat each other as we are. My determinism is not yours, the things that push me to react are not the same that move you to action; very occasionally, my feelings direct me to follow the road your reasoning moves you down. But in as much as I am myself, with my mind together, I sustain that I am worth something, and I don’t claim to be your equal. Perhaps I am less muscular, perhaps your mind’s capacity is superior to mine. Perhaps you are more sensitive to certain emotions which do not happen to disturb me. But insofar as I am myself you cannot tear me away from anything, nor claim ownership of my product, if I don’t think that what you offer me is what I’m looking for. So we shake hands, whether we agree or not, whether we are going to trade the products of our efforts or not. I continue being myself, and you continue as you were.

A love with many faces

Because I appeared to be alive, and vegetated. Because I was a kind of undead being, I didn't worry about love. I closed my eyes and quit listening to my understanding. I imposed silence on the throbbing of my heart. I told myself that love doesn't flourish except in plentitude, in the exuberance of life. That love is to life as the spinal column is to the body. That it is for life what energy is for matter. And that during those long months, interminable, of exile, I was going to throw away all thought, all worry relative to love.

And I made no exception for any of the ways in which love manifests itself in the spirit or senses.

Love, in its essential aspect. Noble, elevated, mystical. Love, stronger than death. Accord of two wills. Or of two consciousnesses. Or of two evolutions, ringing out the same note together when the shock of events made them vibrate; when the most unforgettable unpredictable things happen, making them resonate with pleasure or pain, sadness or joy. In the abyss of their destinies, the love that their encounter realized consecrated or in the process of being consecrated. Or as a fusion of two affinities that called to each other and themselves. Atop the mountains and seas, above separations and distances. And which they had both envisioned in their futures when they met. And met again. Love that doesn't exist nor understands itself. Without an absolute understanding of the loved one, a comprehension for all moments. Which leaves no room for secrets, no mysteries. Not inquisitorial love. Nor suspicious, nor jealous, nor nagging, nor invasive love. But that love which hums deep within those who love so completely that no thought, no act on the loved one's part can surprise, nor come up unannounced, nor helpless.

Or, love in its sentimental, pure, delicate aspect; faithful, infinite, profound. The love that needs good earth to grow in, whose primordial element is caring, affectionate tenderness, persistent, obsequious love, that in order to develop and live would need an atmosphere or reciprocal attachment. Love that makes the loved one's accent change, that changes their voices. That one of its glances makes one tremble in the brain. Which does not resist a kind word, a gesture of true sweetness. But that shakes like a poplar leaf when it hears the footstep of a stranger. That love which feeds itself with its own flames. That always finds an offering to pleasure on the altar, an offering taken from an inextinguishable reserve when the fire that burns on the altar threatens to diminish in intensity. Love that keeps no account books of losses and gains. Love that suffers, laments and cries over the idea of inflicting suffering and causing tears. That love that neither the wounds, nor the drownings, nor the deprivations could ever debilitate, beat down or starve. Love that pardons, not seven but seventy times. That love that consoles, that cures sickness, and welcomes new progeny celebrating its turn. The love that disgrace makes more vigorous, which ties itself to a destiny like a rock sinks into an oak tree, humble and perfumed like a violet in a valley. Certain love, that lasts, love that gives birth to love. That lives on love, that dies of love, and that sometimes succumbs to excess of love.

Love in its butterfly like, vagabond, carefree aspect. Which knows no law but that of its caprices, which follows its caprices though it die trying. Love that devours the flower without waiting for the fruit to mature, passionate love, iron red in the fire, incoherent love. Which finds no meaning outside the inflammation of its liveliness and in the quickness of its being put out. That likes tabooed pleasures, prohibited enjoyments, forbidden caresses, unpredictable adventures.

Mischievous love, rascally, orgiastic, indecent, unstoppable, immodest, impatient love, terror of the greedy and of people with good sense. Love that doesn't consult the marriage records or the civil registers, that kind of love that could care less about all the barriers and constraints, that crouches between the fake layers of identity and hides in the dark corners of the alleyways. Love which knows no remorse nor spite, nor fidelity, nor constancy, which forgets yesterday and ignores tomorrow, that never worries about drying up the tears it causes. Light, frivolous, ironic, happy, mocking love, in revolt; playful love, satyr-like, love, child of bohemia, gypsy love.

Well, then, I don't think I've left out any of the many faces under which love appears, in the heart, the brain, and the senses.

And as I had imposed it upon myself to refuse a single thought to love, love appeared to me to be even more fertile, more tremendous, more potent. What a desert-like existence, where love no longer flourishes and becomes fruitful! What weakness, an existence where love no longer defies the forces that dispute the orientation of the will! What impotence, a life that ignores the resources of creation, of originality, of freshness, that resound and shine in the presence of Love!

Variations on voluptuousness

I know that voluptuousness is a theme that people don't like talking about nor writing about. To speak of it causes a certain alienation, or provokes complaints of bad taste. There are books in any library that embrace nearly all the aspects of human activity. There are dictionaries and encyclopedias. Perhaps there are a hundred books, concerning a single specialization of human manual production. And I'm not even including political or sociological books. But not a single book can be found on the shelves consecrated to voluptuousness. There are magazines about numismatics, philology, heraldry, fishing, card games. Even the most minor artistic or poetic tendency has its magazine or paper. The most insignificant ism has its bulletin. Love novels abound, and one can even find books that speak of free love and sexual hygiene. But not a single periodical is devoted to a frank look at voluptuousness, without reserve, discussing it as one of the most important founts of life energy, as happiness, as a stimulant of life struggling to exist.

People circulate long, drawn out studies about how to paint, how to sculpt, about woodworking, stonecutting or metal forging. But I seek in vain for documented articles that consider voluptuousness as an art, which expound the old refinements, and propose new ones. It isn't that voluptuousness is irrelevant to them. But they're only interested in it as something clandestine, shadowy, something hidden behind closed doors. Only then do they speak of it. As if nature wasn't sincerely voluptuous! As if the heat of the sun and the scent of the fields weren't conducive to voluptuousness!

I am not ignorant of the reasons for this attitude. I know their origin. The Christian virus infects the brain. The Christian venom circulates in your veins. The reign of your Owner isn't of this world. And you are the slaves to this master in his reign. Yes you, socialists, revolutionaries, anarchists — who swallow unblinking a hundred plastic columns about social demolition and construction, but who are "obsessed" and scandalized by two hundred lines calling people to the voluptuous experience. Ah, poor slaves!

Art and Science

The present epoch is notable for the fact that it contains the existence of a human race which tends more and more to dress and eat the same way, to stay in living spaces constructed from the same mold: a humanity that thinks the same way about everything and in the middle of which, if this isn't reacted to vigorously, there are distinct personalities and original temperaments, inventive and creative minds which will become more and more rare until they constitute real anomalies.

Art for the artist

Let no one speak to us about the uselessness of art, because it constitutes a vehicle of personal affirmation and manifestation. Yes, art is useless when it is "social", when its interpreters prostitute themselves, that is, when they try to be liked, when they submit themselves to current opinion. Any theory that attempts to collectivize for the use and happiness of all, those sensations that only make some happy is truly harmful and toxic.

True art, art for the artist, is not toxic. It develops the artist, it brings up desire and appetite in the spectator, it awakens the will to intensify and deepen as far as possible the affirmation of the "I" in the work.

Who would say that nature always produces only useful or toxic things? No matter how imperfect it may be, it always produces something enjoyable.

I don't ask artists, creators or interpreters to please me. I feel capable of determining which pieces harmonize with my desires and those that don't satisfy me. I ask the artist to make art: to put his "whole soul" into the work, that he affirm himself in it intensely, with as much sincerity and passion as the cockerel in the morning as he sings his cock-a-doodle-doo, or the turkey making his rounds.

What I ask from the artist is not that he marry his work with my conception of beauty, but rather that he reveal to me what he is when he paints, sculpts, dances, plays, or declaims. It is the artist's idea of feminine beauty that interests me when I see Venus sculpted in Paros marble. I am interested in their vision of the position of the sun, reproduced with such an orgy of colors in those canvases which the indifferent multitudes can't recognize the beauty of. It is the scream of their hearts, broken by their abandonment by the loved person which saturates their poems. It is their personal interpretation of this waltz by Strauss. What interests me in the artist is original individuality, creative manifestation, affirmative initiative. It is, in a word, their personal manner of approaching art.

Either art for the artist, or the artist for the art. Either the work of art in which the artist described, gave shape to his interior vision, where he spilled out all his imagination and his experiences, the work of art as an act of individual revelation, as a way to manifest the most intimate emotions and sensations. Either that, or the artist for the art: the artist-servant of a formula, slave to a technique, a needy person who proposes the perfection of his execution of the sincerity of an impression. The artist for the art: which pursues a "social" end, which writes, paints, or sculpts to obtain the consensus of others, to convince and to persuade, the artist who sacrifices the sincerity of his perception to the necessity of being understood by the easily disturbed. No! Art for the artist, or nothing!

One can possess the basic technique of an art and remain fallacious, that is, to write, paint, or sculpt to produce a determined effect, to become renowned, to make money — in other words, to become exactly the opposite of an artist. On the other hand, one can be a great artist without having ever produced a single work of art. In other words, one can be a dreamer, an artist inside, for one's whole life.

To demand of yourself "perfection" in your own artwork does not always reveal the creative spirit, a initiator's temperament. It can certainly connote excellent, precious gifts of ability and capacity; it can be a proof of certain qualities of a skilled laborer, but in my eyes, it is force, potency, originality that attracts me to a work, not the finishing of details and constant, suffocating worry about formal perfection. I ask that a work move my sensibility to the point of drawing tears from my eyes, that it put my capacity for comprehension to the test, that it make a hurricane of contradictions rise up within me. I want to see in every work of art an attempt, a sketch, not a definite object, outside of competition, so limited, so perfect, that its creator cannot surpass it any longer.

Reflections on poetic language and its modes of expression.

Writers who have studied the question are almost all in agreement when they say that poetry preceded prose: that before composing books of history or geography, grammatical or philosophical treatises, man expressed himself in verse or declaimed rhapsodies. The poet preceded the grammarian. This is easily understood if it is admitted that poetry is the "intimate song of the human spirit", as the romantics would say. If it is also admitted that the poetic language is the most appropriate for the translation of the crises of joy and pain, the wrenchings of tenderness and hatred, the sentiments of faith and doubt, the dreams that console and the deceptions that deprive us of hope. Prose is too disciplined and dependent on grammatical form to serve as a vehicle for the description of the passions that wage war in the human being, for the expression of the sufferings and enjoyments that fill our days. Up to now we have not diverged in any way from the classical perspective. The point at which we break off from the school is when they say that poetry is not of a complete character until the poetic language is subjected to certain measures, to certain rhythmic combinations, subject to a set of rules which regulate what they call "Poetic Art".

Is poetry the translation, the representation of the emotions that shake and vibrate a human being? If we say yes, I don't see how that can accommodate a collection of rules: to impregnate poetry with cadences and measures that constitute impediments to the sincerity of expression. If poetry is a literary process, subject to the observation of certain fixed rules, it ceases to translate, to manifest what afflicts the soul, and is no more than a way of writing, as conventional as prose... It would no longer be able to reflect the agitation of the emotions that live in people except by means of rhythmic combinations in which spontaneity and truth would be as singularly deformed as the emotions themselves.

It isn't that we are trying here to negate the architectural aspect of a poem composed of many different cantos, each of which comprise a regular number of rhyming alexandrine verses, aligned systematically; nor are we trying to doubt the monumental character of a piece of theater, ordered into scenes and acts, meticulously articulated, with majestic monologues and without breaking the rules of the poetic art. It is not a question of a failure to recognize talent, or the way those

who put them together elaborate them, nor of genre itself at all. However, it is only far away from this “form” that the drifting, free nature of that poetry abandoned to chance manifests itself, with that impetuous style that distinguishes poetry from the other expressions of human emotion and thought. Instead of the famous “beautiful chaos”, I see nothing but precepts, levels, chains of arpeggios; hooks, lines, and sinkers...

Without a doubt, a form is necessary for the materialization of cerebral production. It is necessary to reword one's thoughts so they can be understood and multiply. Papyrus, canvas, paper, colors, inks, pencils, cloth, scissors, marble, the kinds of type, are other intermediaries, as such, which the intellectual worker or the artist cannot be deprived of. What I deny is that the measures and the rhymes are the only form of the poetic voice. You may object in vain that it has been that way up until today — or more or less up to today — in all the literature of all the so-called civilized peoples, whose poetic production, even when they don't use rhymed verses, indeed do employ the repetitive meter of the Greeks and latrines. The theme would require a more profound study. I will respond quickly that it's just the force of tradition and custom, intellectual prejudices, and the influences of a unilateral education that make us think those rigid forms are necessary.

It is not a question, either, of denying the effects that one can achieve with rhyme and meter, but rather of affirming that they cannot give a poetic character to a piece of literature that doesn't already have one. An excellent rhymer can be a detestable poet. What distinguishes poetry from prose is not that ‘prose doesn't express itself with uniformly cadenced phrases, and doesn't contain a determined number of verses, and rhymed syllables following each other in a certain order’. What distinguishes poetry from prose is that the form of the poetic voice is much more distinctive, much less artificial than the prosaic voice. Poetry cannot be as stiff as prose can, isn't so concerned with syntax, pays little attention to the conventions of style, is less clear and more tumultuous, works better with plays on words, new words, and inversions. In brief, there is between poetry and prose as much a difference as there is between a canal and a downpour flowing down a mountain.

This critique is not in bad faith, nor is it being made out of a lack of taste, nor out of an ineptitude for the comprehension of the great classical or romantic poets, nor out of some dislike for the Parnassians. It is known: the Corneilles, the Racines, the Boileaus, the Molières, the Lamartines, the Mussets, the Victor Hugos, the Leconte de Lises, have produced verses of an undeniable amplitude, rhythm, sonorousness, and sentimentality. I fear, however, that in them their talent may have damaged their creative impulse and sincerity. I fear that in many cases talent cannot be distinguished from ability and subtleness. Seeing the outpour of majestic verses from the great classic poets of the 14th century, the image of the rows of soldiers, magnificently adorned and carefully lined up in a Versailles hall, waiting straight-faced for the Sun King to come smile at them. In the same way, when I read the poems of the first half of the 19th century, I seem to always hear an echo which the words of the prestigious orators sets off, speaking as though they were the formidable lawyers of some poor convict.

It is up to he who creates, who initiates, who puts out a work, to determine whether to write in a “form” is in accord with his aspirations. If the poet can pour out with more sincerity the “intimate song of his spirit” through the intermediary of alexandrines or ten syllable verses, who would object to that? But then let us stop looking at the poet who makes use of phrases that occur to him and puts them together according to an arrangement of his own, a phrase placement that is personal and seems to him to be better than the cadenced and rhymed phrases of the commonly accepted “poetic art”. Alliteration, the intended repetition of certain words, accentuation, the

elevating and subordinating of certain parts of a phrase are technical proceedings whose quality depends on the talent of their creator and also on his project.

The original, creative poet, who occupies himself above all with “singing” his emotions, with giving free reign to whatever he feels, who has put to himself the task of translating poetically all the pulls, the urges, the crises, the fears, and the desires of men facing the difficulty of the struggle for existence, never submits to any imposed form, no matter how cherished it is by tradition, rules, or school.

Poems

The dream

I dream of a country without suffering
where no one groans under the weight of solitude,
and hearts dared to hope,
with no layers of darkness blackening their desires.

A country without tears and sadness,
where happiness would replace torment,
I dream of a country without suffering,
where one could live with integrity.

I dream of a country where all the smells of misery
would be impossible, where neither hunger nor cold
was suffered by anyone, where free, full,
brilliant, life could finally live.

I dreamt of a country where fecund science
would stir in everyone a noble and beautiful desire,
the desire to know, without heavy and burdensome
limits confining the flight of the mind.

I dreamt of a country where without any difference,
without the vulgar goals of gold and honor,
but acting upon the stimulus of common accord
the most diverse projects would be carried out.

It is not in heaven, this country I dreamt of,
It is in our world, full of prejudices and errors,
and from which we would like to flee, towards a new end —
it is upon this bitter world that its foundation awaits.

It is amongst those who are tired of stalling and obstacles,
amongst those who have decided to act here and now
that the radiant sun of all our dreams will shine;
if our will is founded on one alone.

Sensibility

I'd prefer to tremble in the heat of battle
To hear the crash of cannon's echoing fear
Standing amongst the dead and half dead,
Harvested by the shrapnel,
Than to see your eyes fill with tears.

I'd prefer to face a bandit assaulting me
In the night, in the middle of the woods, see
Shivering rays tear across the sky. But
I cannot resist for a moment
The sad pearls your eyes fashion.

And if others think it is pure laziness,
That I am a child broken by emotion,
I won't respond, it doesn't hurt me.

I have no hatred for those of frozen soul,
But I don't understand those who can see
Their love cry, insensitive and calm.

Progress or dementia?

Because, feverish, he says "I can go faster,
And I want to elevate myself higher: As a somber prisoner
I travel the world, which in every way is narrow to me,
To languish in it. I still don't accept
The torrents dotting the skies with their idyll slowly,
And the antique trill of the gallant nightingale,
They are no longer of my time. I would like a push
Towards the new, the unforeseen... or to find in myself
A still-hidden nook. Mountains, oceans, valleys,
Rivers, deserts, forests, lakes, have become
So common. I need to extend into the future,
To know the still virginal tremblings of the infinite blue."

Because he says: "I want to raise myself up as high as the condor
To where the cities flee from my eyes
And where I can no longer see the yellow of the reaped fields
Nor the waving of the grasses in the capricious winds."
Because he invades the domain of the winged ones
And penetrates the skies more every day,
You imagine glorious destinies for man,
And deify his audacious gestures.
You bow, you become delirious, you adore imprudence,
You deck with flowers the altar of the new cult;
Who knows whether it's progress, regression, or dementia?
I prefer to sing to the fertile and fragrant earth.
I don't believe that the rough voice of the motors
Will ever be worth the most timid song of the troubadour,
Nor the peaceful refrain of crystal clear fountains,
Nor the sound of the reaper harvesting the grains.

Commentary without pretensions

... It is necessary to have the audacity to say that science is shit, with a dry tone, like Jarry said, because the science of a world without a conscience can only bring men to their ruin.

Gilbert Lamireau, in *Proposals of a crime-thinker*

I don't disdain the so called applications of science. When I contrast the complexity of modern life — as it is lived in the great agglomerations of humans — with the simple life that one can live by renouncing all things not indispensable for living a life of good moral and physical health, it should not be understood that I think we should remain disarmed in the face of the mechanical acquisitions that surround us. Given that to live is to struggle, that is, to resist whatever tends to diminish and mechanize people, it is indispensable to do so by making use of all the means within our reach to attain success. I don't count myself amongst those fanatics of "life lived entirely in nature", for the simple reason that in our overpopulated regions it is very difficult to do so. A few days of escape to places where civilization, in spite of it all, is still not absent, followed by a return to the habitual, urban, agitated, feverish world we live in cannot mean a "return to nature". I don't doubt, however, that it would be impossible to live a simple life, relatively; on the margin of civilization, if one consents to put up with the inherent inconveniences.

Some time ago I received a letter from some comrades who were vacationing on an island in the Cyclides, where there was no electricity nor any means of transport aside from animals. These comrades were staying in the houses of the people who lived on the island, and were treated very hospitably, and I suppose the problem of getting food didn't cause any great unrest.

In spite of the constant sun and the endless blue sky, it would be interesting to know not only — in the case of a prolonged stay — if those comrades would have been able to adapt themselves to that existence, which seems very simplified; if they, moreover, might have been adopted by the people living there, who are apparently prisoners of rather elaborate religious prejudices, and enslaved to customs that we denounce daily.

To renounce civilization to submit silently to puerile superstitions that recall medieval times seems to us to be incompatible with the aspiration to the individual emancipation of the mind and body, a *sine qua non* condition of our interpretation of life.

But the preceding is a digression. While going over those lines I thought about those people who flatter themselves that they've made comprehensible what they call the "latest progress in science". I see that we are all being obligated to deposit confidence in an "elite" comprised of privileged people who have access to instruments that we lack, aside from certain tools or apparatus of simple acquisition. When it is a question of delicate apparatus that our range of possibilities does not permit us to obtain (unless suddenly access to them would be free, which is not the case for most apparatus), we must refer to the results obtained or described by members of this "elite". We have no electronic microscopes, no laboratories, nor gigantic telescopes available to us. If we are told that such and such a luminous ray emitted by the NNN nebula has spent

XXX thousands of millions of light years to reach us, we can't really contradict those numbers any more than we can contradict the affirmations lavished upon us by such and such professor whose work is, as they say, "in fashion", when it comes to such and such vaccine or drug. We are spoken to about proven facts, for instance, in the field of nuclear science, but we have no way of controlling conditions in such a detailed fashion for the operations that would be necessary for us to reaffirm and prove to ourselves the fabrication of an atom bomb or a satellite, etc. We are forced to have to rely on the good faith of the technicians. I recently paged through a book that talks about cybernetics, a book full of algebraic formulas, and I had to confess to my friend that had given it to me that, like him, I understood nothing of what it said.

I could give more examples. But the fact that the people who spend their time making understandable the proofs or hypotheses of the scientists cannot, any more than I can, control them nor disprove them. We are relegated to an inferior status (since it is free, our approval is apparently worth nothing anyway.)

To the hypotheses invented by such and such an illustrious professor, as a result of experiences that we cannot verify, we could not oppose another hypothesis, unless we were to venture into those vast realms ourselves, and then it would be objected that our conclusions deserve no examination because of the fantastic studies realized by the masters of the science in question.

It is, then, impossible to doubt the capacity of these wise men, to doubt their sincerity, the independence of their spirit, their intellectual integrity, etc. Their products are evidently unquestionable. Faced with them, we find ourselves in the same situation as that of the primitive man finds himself in when faced with the "medicine man". In his book, "False Science and Scientific Falsehood," Jean Rostand tells us the fantastic story of the N rays, which many wise men today admire — but which have never existed. This here is my way of curing the sick, say the medicine men — you must believe in my gestures and my sentences. In that way you will be cured of your illness, unless you die of it. The poor man can do nothing but lean forward to hear more. That's what we do, humbly, before the therapist with his degrees, when he prescribes for us a medicine, the composition of which escapes our examination and control, and there's no reason, we must think, to question its efficacy if we consider its use to be satisfactory. Our function is not that of control over science, but of acceptance of what science teaches as irrefutable truths, at least for the moment. I think, sometimes, about the controversies that surround the doctrine of evolution, of mutation (or transmutation), the constitution of matter, the expansion of the universe, the formation of the solar system, the appearance of life on Earth, and the existence of stars, etc... We are poverty stricken as we await the future to bring us a scientific truth, which, later, will be followed by another hypothesis. All of this uncontrollable from any position but that of the scientific "elite". There is no need, then, to cross the seas to find the "medicine-man" and the "primitive man", since we have them all right here, except for the fact that we call our primitivism "civilization" and we call our medicine men "experts."

Far be it from us to put forth the idea that the expert could have bad faith, or that he might let himself be influenced by moral, political, religious, economic or social considerations, except where it would concern his aspiration to honors and a good personal situation — both of which are things having nothing to do with their work. But if there might appear in us an inkling of doubt, we would find ourselves uninformed, deprived, incapable of doing away with ambitions that have nothing to do with the quest after science but corrupt it, powerless to formulate any kind of opinion, lacking the indispensable material to pass impartial judgment on which are the convincing experiments and which are not so convincing. There are few things we can realize

with the means presently available to us common people, and this obligates us to accept, in spite of everything, arguments which offer no alternatives — an intolerable thing for individualists (as it is for all anarchists).

Will there always be an aristocracy, an expert-class, absolute proprietors of the tools necessary for the acquisition of knowledge, and a ragged trousered proletarian class, reduced to the minimum portion when it comes to the distribution of and access to the indispensable instruments of serious verification and control of scientific investigations, where the approval of no institute is necessary to keep a job or stay in that realm? I don't know. But I do understand that I would like to be part of a less complicated, less differentiated social ambiance, a simpler society, where underinvolvement as well as overinvolvement do not exist. The error is in believing that one makes this desire real by putting one's self in a position of marginality, outside of civilization, a position that is necessarily limiting. We will have hardly put our backs into the fallow land, into the mountains, and the beaches (from whence we were never really absent), when it will begin again to imprison us, to envelop us and push us to use the inventions and techniques we have become the perpetual toys of. It is above all the task of those comrades that are making an effort to initiate us into a knowledge of the progress of science to spread such information as would be advantageous for the creation of an ethics of individuality, the will to be one's self, the possession of a dialectical and incontestable consciousness of the fact of one's existence.

Epilogue

Emile Armand's influence in Spain.

Emile Armand (1872–1962), the French anarchist individualist, was a very popular activist in his time. It is not certain why he is so unknown today, since he was known in Spain in a number of libertarian circles. connected with eclecticism, naturalism, vegetarianism and communitarian lifestyles. His influence was much greater than a quick look would reveal. Armand divulged his thought in the workers' press, spreading in his magazines and books the most advanced ideas around at the time about sexuality, communes, and the position of the autodidactic and critical individualist against authoritarianism and exploitation. The son of a "communard", a man of notable vitality, he founded, in 1901, an organ of tolstoyan, or Christian anarchist tendency, called the New Era. He directed, over a certain time, the periodical *Anarchy*, collaborated on Sebastian Faure's *The Libertarian*, and was the force behind the magazine *The Outsider*, which appeared in Orleans between 1922 and 1939, putting out a total of 335 issues¹. This magazine, in 1926, took on the subtitle, "Organ of practice, realization, and anarcho-individualist camaraderie.". He was also behind its successor, *The Unique*, which was also distributed in Orleans and which came out between 1945 and 1956 and consisted of 110 issues.²

Armand passed from a militant Christianity to pacifist and non violent anarcho-individualism. Nonetheless he always defended the anarchists in his publications, including the partisans of expropriation, who were rather common in the anarchist movement between the two world wars. His defense of "illegalism" in his anarchist magazines earned him a good number of enemies in the movement itself, amongst the more "calm" sectors; amongst them Jean Grave himself accused Armand, Andre Lorulot, Albert Libertad, Paraf-Javal, and many others who collaborated on *Anarchy*, of ideological deviation, and of provoking, with what Jean Grave considered their 'dissolute lives', the demoralization of the movement in general³. Max Nettlau also dedicated some unkind words to the nucleus of French anarcho-individualists in his *Anarchy* through the centuries. Anyway, the virulence of his writing, his antireductionist positions, his ample gazes, and his constant provocation of all orthodoxy — including anarchist orthodoxy — gave a new vitality to the European anarchist movement. He also brought in renovations that were paradoxically linked with their roots and with the spontaneous groupings of individuals into affinity cells in Bakunin's sense. The individualists, thanks to written propaganda, put in motion certain stag-

¹ On Armand, consult MAITRON, Jean, *The Anarchist Movement in France*. There is a small biography in BEKAERT, Xavier: *Anarchism — Violence and Non-violence*. Also, about authoritarianism in LEWIN, Roland, *Sebastian Faure and "The Hive" or Libertarian Education*.

² The *Unique* had a notice saying that it was an "interior bulletin exclusively destined for the friends of Emile Armand. It may not be sold to the public." This subtitle was removed in March of 1947. At the end of the magazine's life in July-August 1956, the magazine was continued by a bulletin inside "Defense of Humanity" which was published between 1957 and 1962.

³ See the rather exaggerated accusations of GRAVE, Jean, *The Libertarian Movement in the 3rd Republic: souvenirs of a revolutionary*, Paris 1930, pg. 184, and footnote.

nant sectors of the revolutionary syndicalist movement, because their philosophy and thought was in accord with Armand's ideas of self-education and self-critique.

Armand's theoretical work revolves around three key ideas: anarcho-individualism, amorous camaraderie — sexuality without restraints — and the free association of individuals into communes, commonly called "free milieus" by the anarchists of the early 20th century.

This whole wave of Armand's thought was very diffused in Spain after the middle of the twenties, by his anarcho-individualist comrades. His articles appeared in Barcelona in *La Revista Blanca*, and in Valencia in the magazine, *Studies*. Armand began to be heard by the Spanish public in 1903 when he published an expansive study of Tolstoy in *La Revista Blanca*; Tolstoy, the Christian anarchists. The idealist anarchists. Libertarian communism does not shine for everyone. He quickly entered into polemics with Carlos Malato; this lasted various years, involving Federico Urales as well, who became from that point on a faithful reader of Armand's works, which ended up inspiring his famous work, *Adventurer of Love*, published in episodes in *La Revista Blanca* in its second epoch.⁴

Through thick and thin, his most constant translator (into Spanish) was Jose Elizalde, force behind the group "Sunlight and Life", from the Barcelona neighborhood Clot; he was the secretary of the Federation of Anarchist Groups, which became part of the FAI in 1927, and he also collaborated on two of the most important Spanish anarcho-individualist magazines: *Ethics* and *Initials*, both published in Barcelona. The promoters of *Ethics*, with Jose Elizalde at the head, published their review monthly, from January 1927 until January of 1929. After that it became *Initials*: A Monthly eclectic magazine of individual education. His editorial energies were complemented by another original initiative, which was not much explored at the time from a libertarian perspective: he published a magazine for children that appeared in 1928 under the meaningful title, *Bloom* (floreale); it was at the same time the main organ of the Nativist anarchist school. The singularity of *Ethics* consisted in the fact that it never called itself an anarchist or libertarian magazine — it must be remembered that at the time the country was under military dictatorship and hundreds of anarchist militants were doing "preventative" prison time or were in exile — but it instead defined itself as a magazine of Individual education, philosophy, literature, art and naturalism.

In the 6th issue of *Ethics*, in June of 1927, a small commentary on Armand's work, *Free Love* was published: "Unfortunately, there are few women who read him and know his ideas, but Armand, a flood of theory sowing its seeds, fills the furrows with them, and they will gradually flower, as is already happening in the background, as a haven of peace and love. He has put himself to the task of defending Free Love, which obsesses so greatly those who truly feel the pain of seeing the submission of females." In the following number of the magazine, a very important article of Armand's was published, entitled "Let us fight against Jealousy", which set off a powerful polemic and caused a great interest. Armand's widespread readership in Spain at the time was largely due to the fact that he published most of his articles in newspapers, but in 1936 he made use of the distributorship operated out of *Initials* magazine to put into action a small publishing house of his own, and began to sell his publication, *Anarchist-Nudism*.

The internationalist idea also penetrated into Armand's mind, and he became a defender of the planned languages, like Esperanto and Ido, which according to him would erase the differences in

⁴ On this question see URALES, Federico: *The evolution of Philosophy in Spain* Barcelona, 1968, pag. 51 and footnotes.

understanding between individuals. Jose Elizalde, his friend and translator, was also the director of the Ido-ist newspaper *Ad-Avane!* which, in accord with Armand, also defended the theses of the Ido language against its rival Esperanto. Elizalde had a great polemic with Saljo — an esperantist militant — in the pages of *La Revista Blanca*; it was not a new argument, since it had already begun in *Land and Freedom* in 1917–1918, and was continued in *Free Land, Conscious Generation*. Elizalde, however, announced himself to be a professor of both languages in the Eclectic Naturalist Cultural Center of Clot, giving free night classes for workers.

We know that in 1926 the International Library in Paris published a book of Armand's in Spanish — *Realism and Idealism mixed — Reflections of an Anarchist Individualist*. Also, in the 30s, one of his most scandalous books appeared from Orto books in Valencia — *Libertinage and Prostitution: great prostitutes and famous libertines: influence of the sexual act in the political and social life of humanity*. In 1934 "Orto, Library of Social Documentation" published one of Armand's most distributed books in Spanish, and one that had already appeared in France in 1931: *"Ways of Life in Common without State nor Authority: Sexual and Economic Experiences through History."* The large volume, 400 pages long, collected together a number of experiences of the "free milieus" or Communities that motivated, in their time, an ample discussion about their viability, or lack thereof, in anarchist circles. The majority of the information came to Armand from the extensive correspondence he maintained as editor of his magazine *The Outsider*, which was already an open forum for the narration and communication of all these kinds of experiences. In the prologue to this book, Armand says about his book that "from the anarchist individualist perspective, it seems difficult to be hostile towards those human beings, who, having no more than their individual vitality, attempt to realize all, or a part, of their aspirations. Moreover, many Colonies stayed in existence for a number of generations, and one must ask one's self why those who oppose the colonies always bring up their "failure"; as if they would only accept them if they had lasted indefinitely, deny their utility, and do not consider them to be convenient. Every Colony that functions in the present conditions is an organism of opposition, of resistance, whose make-up could be likened to the cells; the members of the colonies had to struggle not only with the exterior enemy (the social ambiance) but also, in the present conditions, against the enemy within, against the poorly-extinguished prejudices that are reborn from their ashes, an inevitable laxity, etc.; On the other hand, this need for the colonies to last forever makes little sense, since we have to consider the colonies for what they were: a means, not an end. It is equally an educational, individual and collective "means" (a kind of practical propaganda)." The author, after discussing some interesting reflections about these collective experiments, passes over to make a history of these attempts and gives us a dense listing of all the collective experiments he could amass documentation of, and their localization on the terrestrial globe. Then he reviews a series of "free milieus", not only anarchist, but also of religious, atheist, cooperative, owenist, fourierist, henry-george-ist, libertarian communist, collectivist, or individualist associationist origin. Armand collected and edited testimonials from the inhabitants of those communes, and what is most important, popularized amongst the working people the possibility of new forms of association and cooperation, alternatives to the hierarchical family and rigid workplace.

With his works, Armand introduced to Europe some very distinct pacifist and anarcho-communitarian currents of the French revolutionary syndicalist movement, which had for a long time been a great influence on the whole anarchist movement in the Spanish state. Thanks to him, the thought of Benjamin Tucker (1854–1939), the stirnerist John Henry Mackay (1864–

1933), Morris Hillquit, Josiah Warren, etc., were introduced to Europeans. Also thanks to him, the whole huge European communitarian-anarchist tradition was recuperated by the movement, after having fallen off to the side and being forgotten after the Marxists disqualified what they called "Utopian Socialism" by calling themselves the "Scientific Socialists" and opposing the two. Armand revitalized the ideas of Cabet, Owen, and above all, of Charles Fourier, by collecting documentation about the communities that his ideas caused the creation of. Moreover, we can affirm that all of Armand's ideas about freedom in sexual matters come from Fourier's "theory of the four movements", which was as disdained by some "puritan" anarchists as Proudhon was. Fourier explains that humans have to follow the patterns of a markedly sexual universe which always moves in harmony, proposing a new organization of the amorous world in which everyone would be able to express their individuality in the plurality of encounters, which would permit all forms of love, encouraging every imaginable kind of associations. Fourier also fought for the liberation and promotion of women, and intended to make them as equipped, capable, and strong as men, which was an idea far before its time. His ideas were ignored until they were taken up again by some American utopians and by Emile Armand, who launched them once again into orbit, from which they had fallen in an embryonic state.

Armand established fruitful polemics with other anarchist individualists, partisans of sexual freedom without restrictions; an interesting counterpoint was the series of debates he had with the Brazilian free thinker and anarchist Maria Lacerda de Moura, and with a number of other writers. In his way, he always carried on his youthful experiences as a participant in the libertarian talks of the French anarchists Albert Libertad and Paraf-Javal. His tireless activity as a provoker and agitator of European anarchist thinking, on par with that of Fourier, Stirner, Tucker and Mackay, still remains a treasure chest for us to rediscover.

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Émile Armand
Anarchist Individualism and Amorous Comradeship

translated by J, 2004. The texts in this anthology come from the book *Anarchist Individualist Initiation*, published by The Friends of Armand, Florence, Italy, 1956.

To live one's own life: from the book *Realism and Idealism Mixed*, by Emile Armand. Published by the International Library, Paris, 1926 (Spanish version).

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Mini-Manual of Individualist Anarchism

Émile Armand

July 1st, 1911

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I

To be an anarchist is to deny authority and reject its economic corollary: exploitation — and that in all the domains where human activity is exerted. The anarchist wishes to live without gods or masters; without patrons or directors; a-legal, without laws as without prejudices; amoral, without obligations as without collective morals. He wants to live freely, to live his own idea of life. In his interior conscience, he is always asocial, a refractory, an outsider, marginal, an exception, a misfit. And obliged as he is to live in a society the constitution of which is repugnant to his temperament, it is in a foreign land that he is camped. If he grants to his environment unavoidable concessions — always with the intention of taking them back — in order to avoid risking or sacrificing his life foolishly or uselessly, it is because he considers them as weapons of personal defense in the struggle for existence. The anarchist wishes to live his life, as much as possible, morally, intellectually, economically, without occupying himself with the rest of the world, exploiters or exploited; without wanting to dominate or to exploit others, but ready to respond by all means against whoever would intervene in his life or would prevent him from expressing his thought by the pen or by speech.

The anarchist has for enemy the State and all its institutions which tend to maintain or to perpetuate its stranglehold on the individual. There is no possibility of conciliation between the anarchist and any form whatever of society resting on authority, whether it emanates from an autocrat, from an aristocracy, or from a democracy. No common ground between the anarchist and any environment regulated by the decisions of a majority or the wishes of an elite. The anarchist combats for the same reason the teaching furnished by the State and that dispensed by the Church. He is the adversary of monopolies and of privileges, whether they are of the intellectual, moral or economic order. In a word, he is the irreconcilable antagonist of every regime, of every social system, of every state of things that implies the domination of man or the environment over the individual and the exploitation of the individual by another or by the group.

The work of the anarchist is above all a work of critique. The anarchist goes, sowing revolt against that which oppresses, obstructs, opposes itself to the free expansion of the individual being. He agrees first to rid brains of preconceived ideas, to put at liberty temperaments enchained by fear, to give rise to mindsets free from popular opinion and social conventions; it is thus that the anarchist will push all comers to make route with him to rebel practically against the determinism of the social environment, to affirm themselves individually, to sculpt his internal statue, to render themselves, as much as possible, independent of the moral, intellectual and economic environment. He will urge the ignorant to instruct himself, the nonchalant to react, the feeble to become strong, the bent to straighten. He will push the poorly endowed and less apt to pull from themselves all the resources possible and not to rely on others.

An abyss separates anarchism from socialism in these different regards, including there syndicalism.

The anarchist places at the base of all his conceptions of life: the individual act. And that is why he willingly calls himself anarchist-individualist.

He does not believe that all the evils that men suffer come exclusively from capitalism or from private property. He believes that they are due especially to the defective mentality of men, taken as a bloc. There are not masters because there are slaves and the gods do not subsist because some faithful kneel. The individualist anarchist loses interest in a violent revolution having for

aim a transformation of the mode of distribution of products in the collectivist or communist sense, which would hardly bring about a change in the general mentality and which would not provoke at all the emancipation of the individual being. In a communist regime that one would be as subordinated as presently to the good will of the environment: he would find himself as poor, as miserable as now; instead of being under the thumb of the small capitalist minority of the present, he would be dominated by the economic ensemble. Nothing would properly belong to him. He would be a producer, a consumer, put a little or take some from the heap, but he would never be autonomous.

II

The individualist-anarchist differentiates himself from the anarchist-communist in the sense that he considers (apart from property in some objects of enjoyment extending from the personality) property in the means of production and the free disposition of the product as the essential guarantee of the autonomy of the person. Being understood that that property is limited to the possibility of putting to work (individually, by couples, by familial groups, etc.) the expanse of soil or the engine of production indispensable to the necessities of social unity; under condition, for the possessor, of not renting it to anyone or of not resorting pour its enhancement to someone in his service.

The individualist-anarchist no more intends to live at any price, as individualist, were that as exploiter, than he intends to live under regulation, provided that the bowl of soup is assured, clothing certain and a dwelling guaranteed.

The individualist-anarchist, moreover, does not claim any system which would bind the future. He claims to place himself in a state of legitimate defense with regard to every social atmosphere (State, society, milieu, grouping, etc.) which would allow, accept, perpetuate, sanction or render possible:

- a) the subordination to the environment of the individual being, placing that one in a state of obvious inferiority since he cannot treat with the collective ensemble as equal to equal, power to power;
- b) the obligation (in whatever domain) of mutual aid, of solidarity, of association;
- c) the deprivation of the individual and inalienable possession of the means of production and of the complete and unrestricted disposition of the product;
- d) the exploitation of anyone by one of his fellows, who would make him labor on his account and for his profit;
- e) monopolization, i.e. the possibility for an individual, a couple, a familial group to possess more than is necessary for its normal upkeep;
- f) the monopoly of the State or of every executive form replacing it, that is to say its intervention — in its role as centralizer, administrator, director, organizer — in the relations between individuals, in whatever domain;
- g) the loan at interest, usury, agio, money-changing, inheritance, etc., etc.

III

The individualist-anarchist makes “propaganda” in order to select individualist-anarchist dispositions which he should have, to determine at the very least an intellectual atmosphere favorable to their appearance. Between individualist-anarchists relations are established on the basis of “reciprocity”. “Comradery” is essentially of the individual order, it is never imposed. A “comrade” which pleases him individually to associate with, is one who makes an appreciable effort in order to feel himself to live, who takes part in his propaganda of educational critique and of selection of persons; who respects the mode of existence of each, does not encroach on the development of those who advance with him and of those who touch him the most closely.

The individualist-anarchist is never the slave of a formula-type or of a received text. He admits only opinions. He proposes only theses. He does not impose an end on himself. If he adopts one method of life on one point of detail, it is in order to assure more liberty, more happiness, more well-being, but not at all in order to sacrifice himself. And he modifies it, and transforms it when it appears to him that to continue to remain faithful to it would diminish his autonomy. He does not want to let himself be dominated by principles established a priori; it is a posteriori, on his experiences, that he bases his rule of conduct, nevertheless definitive, always subject to the modifications and to the transformations that the recording of new experiences can register, and the necessity of acquisition of new weapons in his struggle against the environment — without making an absolute of the a priori.

The individualist-anarchist is never accountable to anyone but himself for his acts and gestures.

The individualist-anarchist considers association only as an expedient, a makeshift. Thus, he wants to associate only in cases of urgency but always voluntarily. And he only desires to contract, in general, for the short term, it being always understood that every contract can be voided as soon as it harms one of the contracting parties.

The individualist-anarchist proscribes no determined sexual morality. It is up to each to determine his sexual, affective or sentimental life, as much for one sex as for the other. What is essential is that in intimate relations between anarchists of differing sexes neither violence nor constraint take place. He thinks that economic independence and the possibility of being a mother as she pleases are the initial conditions for the emancipation of woman.

The individualist-anarchist wants to live, wants to be able to appreciate life individually, life considered in all its manifestations. By remaining master meanwhile of his will, by considering as so many servitors put at the disposition of his “self” his knowledge, his faculties, his senses, the multiple organs of perception of his body. He is not a coward, but he does not want to diminish himself. And he knows well he who allows himself to be led by his passions or dominated by his penchants is a slave. He wants to maintain “the mastery of the self” in order to drive towards the adventures to which independent research and free study lead him. He will recommend willingly a simple life, the renunciation of false, enslaving, useless needs; avoidance of the large cities; a rational diet and bodily hygiene.

The individualist-anarchist will interest himself in the associations formed by certain comrades with an eye to tearing themselves from obsession with a milieu which disgusts them. The refusal of military service, or of paying taxes will have all his sympathy; free unions, single or plural, as a protestation against ordinary morals; illegalism as the violent rupture (and with certain reservations) of an economic contract imposed by force; abstention from every action, from every labor, from every function involving the maintenance or consolidation of the imposed intellec-

tual, ethical or economic regime; the exchange of vital products between individualist-anarchist possessors of the necessary engines of production, apart from every capitalist intermediary; etc., are acts of revolt agreeing essentially with the character of individualist-anarchism.

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On Sexual Liberty

Émile Armand

1916

Before explaining our notion of “sexual liberty,” I think it is necessary to define *liberty* itself. We all know that liberty could not be an end, for there is no absolute liberty; just as there is no general truth, practically speaking, but what exists in particular verities, there is no general *liberty*; there are only particular, individual liberties. It is not possible to escape certain contingencies; one cannot be free, for example, to not breathe or digest... Liberty is only a abstraction like Truth, Purity, Goodness, Equality, etc. And an abstraction cannot be an end.

Considered instead, from the particular point of view, ceasing to be an abstraction, and becoming a way, a means, *liberty* is understood. It is thus that we call for the freedom of thought, which is to say the power, without external hindrance, to express thoughts in speech or in writing, in the manner in which they present themselves in the mind. It is thus the integral expression of the thought which is the goal pursued, and not liberty.

It is precisely because there are only particular liberties that we can, departing from the domain of the abstract, place ourselves on a solid terrain and affirm “our needs and our desires” — much better than “our rights,” an abstract and arbitrary expression — stifled, mangled or distorted by various sorts of authorities.

Intellectual life, artistic life, economic life, sexual life — we demand for them the liberty to manifest themselves freely, as individuals, in view of the liberty of individuals, apart from the legalistic conceptions and the prejudices of religious or civil order. We demand for them, grand rivers where human activity flows, to run without obstacles, — without the locks of “moralityism” or the dams of “traditionalism” troubling or miring their course. All in all, better *the liberties*, with their impetuous errors, their nervous jolts, their impulsive “lack of perspective,” than the *authorities*, immobile façades, frozen gates before which we wilt and die. Between life out of doors and life in the cellar, we choose the outdoor life.

* * *

When we call for “sexual liberty” — what do we mean? Do we mean “freedom to rape” or debauchery? Do we desire the annihilation of sentiment in the love-life, the disappearance of attachment, tenderness and affection? Do we glorify unthinking promiscuity or animalistic sexual satisfaction, at any time and place? Not at all. In calling for sexual liberty, we simply demand *the possibility for every individual to dispose, as they wish and in all the circumstances of their sexual*

life — according to the qualifications of temperament, sentiment, and reason which are peculiar to them.

Thus we do not demand the liberty to “rape.” Attention: **their sexual life** — that does not imply the sexual life of another. Neither do we demand a liberty of the sexual life which would precede any sexual education. On the contrary, we believe that, gradually, in the period preceding puberty, the human being should be left ignorant of nothing that concerns sexual life, — that is, the inevitable attraction of the sexes — whether that sexual life is considered from the sentimental, emotional or physiological point of view. We believe that advanced minds should have take it to heart to recommend and propagate that education, to never let an occasion escape to engage in it; we think that from the moment that we have just indicated, not only should the human being know what delights — sentimental, emotional, and physical — the sexual life hold, but also what responsibilities it leads to. Both sexes should be lead to understand, for example, that it is up to the woman to choose the hour of conception. And neither sex should be ignorant of the means of contraception. Following my thought to its logical conclusions, I would say that in a society which had not made it possible for its female constituents to refuse or avert an *undesired* pregnancy, those constituents would be perfectly justified in leaving their progeny to the care of the collectivity.

We do not separate the “liberty of the sexual life” from “sexual education.”

* * *

Contrary to the prejudices of religious or civil orders, we treat the sexual question like the intellectual question, like all the questions raised by human activity. Just as the experiences of life, taken as a whole, appear necessary to us so do experiences in that particular phase of life that is sexual life seem indispensable. We declare it an “absurdity” for a young boy or girl of sixteen years to be bound for life in marriage and yet nothing appears more natural than a being of that age maintaining sexual relations with another, of the emotional or physical sort. Moreover, the sexual life from fifteen to twenty years of age differs from the sexual life consider at thirty-five or in the autumn of life. Sexual life is so complicated that the existence of [multiple] simultaneous experiences of sexual life is easily comprehensible, since in each experience, sometimes it is the sentimental or emotional side which dominates, sometimes the emotional or sensual side, and sometimes is the side of pure physical satisfaction. From experience to experience, the degrees of moral, emotional or voluptuous sensations, vary so strangely that we can conclude from it that no experience resembles that which preceded it, or is pursued similarly.

We do not normally pursue identical experiences.

For we do not exclude intense, voluptuous, sensual pleasure from the experiences; we put it on the same plane intense intellectual pleasure (artistic, literary, etc.), moral pleasure, economic pleasure. We consider paltry moralists, morally mutilated, those who place it on some lesser plane. None of the experiences of life are inferior except those caused by the fear of life or the imbalance of the will. Now, normal voluptuousness — whether that is the enjoyment of a splendid landscape or an intensely lived sensual experience — to engender, on the contrary, love of life and exercise of the will.

* * *

Thus “liberty of sexual life” is not synonymous with “debauchery,” otherwise known as “loss of moral equilibrium.” Sexual liberty is exclusively individual order. It presupposes an education of the will which permits each to determine *for themselves* the point where they will cease to be master of their passions or penchants, and education perhaps much more instinctive than it appears at first look. Like all liberties, that of the sexual life involves an effort, not of abstinence — (in fact, abstention from the experiences of life is a mark of moral insufficiency, as debauchery is a sign of moral weakness) — but of judgment, discernment, and classification. In other words, it is not so much a question of the *quantity* or *number* of experiments as of the *quality* of the experimenter. To conclude, *liberty of the sexual life* remains united, in our mind, with a *preparatory sexual education* and a *power of individual determination*.

Liberty of sexual life in *all circumstances*, of course: *in* or *out* of union... If it is true that sexual experiences differ from one another, how can jealousy — morbid attitude of love — exist? Can an individual, subject or object of an experience, reasonably bemoan the lack of necessary qualifications which make one of their fellows the subject or object of another experience? Sentimental experience is one thing, sensual experience another, and the choice of a procreator yet another. It could be that the being that a woman chooses for procreator would not be the one for whom she feels the most affection and that she seeks in the one certain physical qualities to which she is indifferent in the other. Could the one be reasonably jealous of the other?...

* * *

Let’s finish. By replacing the emotional phenomena among the experiences of ordinary life, we have not at all wanted to diminish the importance of the factor “love” in human existence. We think that an experience can be experienced seriously, profoundly, intensely, but that we would be spared many disenchantments and sufferings if a number of the facts of life, instead of being considered as definitive, appeared as temporary, modifiable, revisable — essentially variable. This is accepted from the scientific point of view — from the intellectual point of view — from all points of view, — we can’t comprehend how it would be otherwise from the sentimental, emotional or sexual point of view. It is not enough for us that this idea be adopted hypocritically and practiced clandestinely. We demand for the research and practice of sexual liberty the same broad daylight as for those of other liberties, persuaded that to its development and evolution are linked not only the increase of individual and collective happiness, but also in large part the disappearance of the present state of things.

Moreover, we do not declare ourselves more in favor of unicity or plurality in love than we do against either; and it could well be that in a given couple, one of the constituents will practice unicity while the other practices plurality. And it could be that after some time, unicity could appear preferable to plurality and vice-versa. These are individual questions. What we are asking is that we cease to qualify experience as more or less legitimate depending on whether it is simple or unique. We also ask that we instruct *all* being on these things and that the father, mother, or partner not profit from their privileged situation to keep them hidden from those who are obliged to trust them. To each then, education, to determine their sexual life as they intend, to vary its experiences or to hold themselves to one alone: in a word, to proceed “at will.”

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Émile Armand
On Sexual Liberty
1916

libertarian-labyrinth.blogspot.com

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Our demands as Individualist Anarchists

Émile Armand

1945

The individualist anarchists in the meaning of the UNIQUE (of Stirner's *The Ego and His Own*) do advocate a "society without coercion". This implies the following demands, which are unqualified and without reservations. It is self-evident that these demands are to be realized, completely or partly, as far as is possible.

Individualists of our kind recognize every society as a "Society without Coercion" in which the State and any other aggressive power is eliminated, in which there is no longer any domination of man over man or over a sphere of society (and vice versa) and in which an exploitation of man by man or of man through social institutions (and vice versa) is impossible.

Thereupon the following demands arise:

1. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to decide for oneself in all respects.

This means that every unit in society moves according to its own discretion, develops itself, gathers experiences in accordance with its own preferences, corresponding to its talents, reasoning and personal resolutions.

In short, the individual is responsible only to himself (or to those to whom he has obliged himself) for all his actions.

This freedom finds its limits where the equal freedom of others begins and the danger arises that others are harmed.

2. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to chose and practise one's profession and to utter one's opinion orally and in writing, publicly and privately.
3. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to join any association that has definite and predetermined purposes or any other association of any kind.
4. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to decide for oneself either for or against any expression of solidarity, for and against any contractual obligation of whatever kind and in whatever sphere of human activity and without regard to its aims and its duration. Likewise, the right to freely decide upon withdrawal from a contractual situation, within the framework of clearly predetermined contractual conditions. One precondition is that, in case a contract offer is declined or a contract is dissolved, the dissenters are not penalized

or maligned. But when a contract is dissolved then neither disadvantages nor any harm must arise for the partner that would be contrary to the form and contents of the contract.

5. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for producers and consumers and other partners to negotiate, whether alone or in groups. Full and unrestricted right, regardless of the sphere of activities and their purpose, to select the persons and societies of one's confidence and to authorize them, especially teachers, instructors, physicians, lawyers and arbitrators.
6. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to determine and change the value or price of any goods, the own products or consumer goods, of whatever kind, according to one's own discretion. Likewise untouchable is the right to negotiate in this respect, to use an arbitrator or to do without any determination of values.
7. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for every individual and every association or group to use any money that applies as a means of exchange to themselves, for their goods and service exchanges, to issue it themselves or to accept that issued by others, provided that this is always done by agreement and not under any monopolistic coercion. The same applies to the so-called labour bonds and goods warrants and similar certificates, to bills, letters of credit etc., whether they are negotiable or not. Consequently, there is a definite right to utilize any voluntarily recognized means of payment for all economic transactions, as long as it is not subjected to any legal tender. With this is meant the unrestricted right to utilize any other kind of means of exchange, provided that an acceptor is found who decides for it without any coercion.
8. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for individuals and groups, competing for any job or contract, provided that the applicants are not prevented from fully informing and improving themselves.

Likewise untouchable are the rights to act creatively in accordance with one's desires, to move and settle freely and to advertise one's own cause or services.

9. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to exhibit and realize in any sphere of culture and economics one's opinions or services. There is no other limitation upon this than the condition that nothing may be forced upon others. They may freely decline whatever does not appeal to them. Under this condition the unrestricted right to freedom of expression applies and the right to propagate and teach a theory and to undertake experiments and gather experiences, even when this applies to economic, philosophic, scientific, religious, educational, artistic or any other spheres of activity.
10. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to live from the returns of one's own services or production, even alone, outside of any group or community or society itself, at one's own risk.

Likewise unrestricted is the right to seek to live together with a partner, in a family, in a patriarchal or matriarchal society, in free associations and communes, in close ideological association of whatever kind.
11. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to decide for oneself to join any association or league whose libertarian aims embrace any kind of human activity or search for knowledge. This

applies to associations for any economic, intellectual, ethical, emotional recreational or other purpose and, especially for all spheres of production, consumption, trade, communication, insurance against all possible risks, educational methods and systems, to the utilization of scientific discoveries and of naturally or artificially produced energies.

12. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to secede from any kind of association, but in accordance with the principles and clauses agreed upon when it was established.
13. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for any association, league, cooperative etc. to organize itself in a way that suits its members best. This includes the right to order internal affairs at one's own discretion, in accordance with an internal constitution that applies only to the voluntary members.
14. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to settle upon and utilize for oneself any non-inhabited and not claimed locality or real estate, provided that thereby the equal right of others is not infringed and no one else is exploited thereby.

Under this condition the individual has an incontestable right to possess his means of production (tradesman's tools, instruments, machines, land, minerals etc.).

This requires also the freedom to dispose oneself over the returns from or product of one's own labour — to the extent that no domination over or exploitation of others is involved.

Moreover, the individual shall be guaranteed the unrestricted right to exchange or dispose of his products upon the market or in any other way, regardless whether he does so for payment or under any other condition.

Any association or community has the equal right to apply within the own organization the principles here explained or similar ones.

15. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for each individual and, likewise, for any member of an organized society, to dispose freely over his personal property, i.e. over the utilization rights and the returns that he receives in exchange for his personal labour services and which assure him his support, his accommodation (and, especially for the individual, the means of production).
16. FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to express affection for others and preference for anything, according to one's own discretion, provided that neither any deception or any fraud is associated with this and, most importantly, no one is harmed, restricted or in any way reduced thereby.
17. DEMANDS THAT APPLY ESPECIALLY TO WOMEN AND MOTHERS:

FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for every woman, whether alone or in partnership, to determine for herself her readiness to become a mother.

A child shall remain only as long under supervision or custody until it has reached an age in which it can self-responsibly engage in contracts and associations. This applies also to the guardianship for a child. The mother possesses priority in this — which she may completely or partly transfer to another person or institution.

18. DEMANDS APPLYING ESPECIALLY TO CHILDREN:

FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for the child, boy or girl, to demand an alteration or complete change in its wardship condition. The child may ask for an early declaration that it is of full legal age or for the clarification of any other problem. In this case the child has the right to arbitration and the right to chose the arbitrator or at least one of the arbitrators.

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Émile Armand
Our demands as Individualist Anarchists
1945

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Note by John Zube

The following is merely the translation of a translation. It was written in French by E. Armand, published 1945 in "l'Unique", and reprinted in "LA FEUILLE", published by the Association Max Stirner du Quebec, C.P. 95, Stn. Place D'Armes, Montreal, P.Q H2Y 3E9. The translation into German for publication in "Lernziel Anarchie", No. 4, was done by C.R. This German translation is here roughly translated into English by John Zube, 30.12.1985.

In the comment it is mentioned that Armand's book ["L'Initiation Individualiste Anarchiste", 1923, 344 pp, ed. de "L'en Dehors"], is out of print. An improved and enlarged edition came out in Italian.

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Revolutionary Nudism

Émile Armand

1934

Nudism may be considered “a kind of sport, in which individuals get naked in groups to take a bath of air and light, as one bathes in the sea” (Dr. Toulouse), that is, from a purely therapeutic point of view; it may be considered, as the gymnomystics do (*gymnos* means nude in Greek), as a return to an Edenic state, restoring humans to a primitive and “natural” state of innocence (the thesis of the Adamites of yesteryear). These two points of view give way to a third, ours: that nudism is, individually and collectively, among the most potent means of emancipation. It seems to us to be something else entirely than a hygienic fitness exercise or a “naturist” renewal. For us, nudism is a revolutionary demand.

* * *

Revolutionary in a triple sense: affirmation, protest, liberation.

* * *

Affirmation: to vindicate the ability to live nude, to get naked, to walk around naked, to associate with nudists, with no other care, as one uncovers one’s body, than the possibilities of resisting temperatures. This is to affirm the right to the complete disposition of one’s bodily individuality. It is to proclaim one’s casual indifference to conventions, morals, religious commandments, and social laws that, under various pretexts, keep humans from disposing the different parts of their bodily being as they see fit. Against social and religious institutions in which the use or usury of the human body is subordinated to the will of the lawmaker or priest, the nudist demand is one of the most profound and conscious manifestations of individual freedom.

* * *

Protest: to vindicate and practice the freedom to get naked is, indeed, to protest any dogma, law, or custom that establishes a hierarchy of body parts, that considers, for example, that showing the face, hands, arms, or throat is more decent, more moral, more respectable than exposing the buttocks, breasts, belly, or the pubic area. It is to protest against the classification of different body parts into noble and ignoble categories: the nose being considered noble and the penis ignoble, for example. More importantly, it is to protest against any intervention (of a legal or other nature) that obligates us to wear clothes because it pleases another — whereas it has never occurred to us to object that they do not get undressed, if that is what they prefer.

* * *

Liberation: liberation from wearing clothes, or really of the constraint of wearing a costume that has always been, and can never be anything but, a hypocritical disguise insofar as it increases the importance of what covers the body — of the accessory — and not the body itself, whose cultivation, however, is the essential thing. Liberation from one of the main notions on which the ideas of “permitted” and forbidden, of “good” and “evil” are based. Liberation from coquetry, from the conformism to an artificial standard of appearance that maintains the differentiation of classes.

Let us imagine the general, the bishop, the ambassador, the academic, the prison guard, the warden — naked. What would be left of their prestige, of the authority delegated to them? The rulers know this well, and this is not the least of the motives for their hostility to nudism.

Release from the prejudice of modesty, which is nothing but “shame of one’s body.”

Release from the obsession with obscenity, currently provoked by the uncovering of body parts that social hypocrisy requires us to keep hidden — freedom from the restraint and self-control implied by this fixed idea.

* * *

We will go farther. We maintain, taking up the perspective of sociability, that the practice of getting naked is a factor in better camaraderie, a less narrow camaraderie.

There is no denying that for us a less distant, more intimate, more trusting comrade is the one who reveals her or himself to us not only without intellectual or ethical ulterior motives, but also without hiding their body.

The critics of nudism — moralists or conservative hygienists of the State or Church — suppose that the sight of nudity, or the regular association of nudists of both sexes, exalts erotic desire. This is not always the case. However, contrary to most gymnast theses — for which opportunism or fear of persecution is the beginning of wisdom — we do not deny it either. But we maintain that the erotic exaltation engendered by nudist projects is pure, natural, and instinctive. It cannot be compared with the artificial excitement of the half-naked, the gallant in revealing clothes, and all the artifices of make-up relied on in the dressed, half-dressed, or barely dressed milieu in which we currently operate.

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Émile Armand
Revolutionary Nudism
1934

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The Anarchism of Émile Armand

Émile Armand

1907–1964

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Introduction

The life of Emile Armand (1872–1963) spanned the history of anarchism. He was influenced by Leo Tolstoy and Benjamin Tucker, and to a lesser extent by Whitman and Emerson. Later in life, Nietzsche and Stirner became important to his way of thinking. Previous to this, Armand had broken with Tucker and Tolstoy over the question of violence and illegalism. At the turn of the century many alleged anarchists were turning to crime and violence, *At that time, stealing, counterfeiting, swindling and even pimping were justified in certain anarchist milieus as a means of liberating oneself economically.*¹ Although Armand was himself neither criminal or violent, he felt he could not condemn such activities. However, by 1912, he had second thoughts on illegalism and crime. *In all his subsequent writings Armand was a declared adversary of all violence.*²

When he began his long life as an anarchist writer and thinker, anarchism was mainly oriented to the revolutionary future. One had to wait until “after the revolution” to change one’s life. For Armand, echoing the French individualist named Liberdad, one had to live now, not in some the distant future that might not ever come. The point was to live your revolution in daily life and not construct future imaginary utopias. His true libertarian spirit applied to his writings as well. His words and thoughts were never meant to be turned into party lines or dogmas, but to stir the thought processes. *The true libertarian education doesn’t consist of leading another to think as you do but to make another capable of thinking and living for THEMSELVES.*³

Armand wrote scores of articles for a variety of libertarian publications, but mostly for his own self-published magazines, the best known of which were *L’Anarchie* and *L’En Dehors*. What We Are For — What We Are Against is as fine an exposition of the anarchist creed as has ever been written. In *Anarchist Individualism as Life and Activity* Armand clearly states the meaning of anarchism, differentiating it from all governmental concepts. *As the word “anarchy” etymologically signifies the negation of governmental authority, the absence of government, it follows that one indissoluble bond unites the anarchists. This is antagonism to all situations regulated by imposition, constraint, violence, governmental oppression, whether these are a product of all, a group, or of one person. In short, whoever denies that the intervention of government is for human relationships is an anarchist.*

In *Property*, he critiques all forms of communism, including anarchist-communism, whether property be in the hands of the State, of the collectivity, or of the communist milieu, or of a few capitalists, as at the present time, it makes the individual dependent upon the community, it breeds the master and the slave.

Pie-In-The Sky utopianism is not for Armand. He brings anarchism down from the angelic clouds to the ground of daily life. *The individualist does not put his hope in the future society. He lives in the present moment, and he wants to draw from it the maximum results. Individualist activity is essentially a present work and a present accomplishment. ...we cannot be taxed with being “future-society-ists”. The anarchist individualist is not a future society-ist; a presentist. (The Future Society)*

However, Armand presents contemporary anarchists and libertarians with a number of problems. No doubt influenced by the exaggerations of Max Stirner, he tends to dismiss the impor-

¹ from “Mauricius”, *E. Armand, Son Vie, Son Oeuvre*, La Ruche Ouvrier 1964, taken from the French Individualist Anarchist website.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

tance of society, and indeed, to view it as an enemy along with the state. Contrast this with the approach of Warren, Proudhon, or Tolstoy, all of whom felt that life would be better and freer if society were liberated from the shackles of statism. *“Society”, no doubt, is the crowd that screams “Hurrah!” at the parade of the crippled from the last general slaughter; (Life And Society)*

In spite of his strong anti-utopianism, *there is also a utopian element, The life which the Anarchist Individualist wants to live has no relation to the known social life as we know it. (Life And Society)* Contrast this view with that of Proudhon, Kropotkin or Colin Ward, who see anarchism rooted in the daily life practices of the people. There is a certain naïvity here, *I want to live in a society from which the last vestige of authority has disappeared, but, to speak frankly, I am not certain that the “mass”, to call it what it is, is capable of dispensing with authority... a complete transformation of the general mentality, a different understanding of relations among men, a universal and individual change of state of mind, that will make certain methods and certain institutions impossible. Thus the individualist can affirm with certainty that authoritarianism will in no case continue in the future society. To imagine a “world to come” where there would still be a trace of domination, coercion and duty is nonsense. (Individualist Perspectives)* Contrast this with Proudhon’s calm wisdom that all authority is unlikely to disappear and our best hope is to minimize it.

Note too the elitism in this statement, also repeated in *The Future Society*. *The crowd always goes towards him who speaks well and carries himself well. Its angers last no longer than its admirations. It is always easy to fool and seduce. One can no more base oneself on it now than a century or a thousand years ago. The mass belongs to the strongest, the most superficial,* This elitism compares badly with the populism of the overwhelming majority of his anarchist predecessors and contemporaries.

Nonetheless, these criticisms are minor. His otherwise intransigent anarchism and individualism is needed more than ever in this era of mass conformity, political correctness and unending governmental interference in our lives. At a time when individual rights are overturned in favor of so-called collective rights and apostles of individual liberty are attacked and vilified as “right-wingers” and “reactionaries”, we need to read and study Emile Armand, the last of the “classical anarchists.”

Larry Gambone

What We Are For — What We Are Against

We are a-political and take no part in party quarrels. In all spheres we are for the voluntary against the obligatory; for consent against imposition; for reason against violence; for free examination against dogmatism.

Individualists, we are against the subjugation of the individual to the State, in any form; against the absorption of the ego into the collectivity; against compulsory contracts; against forced solidarity or cooperation; against the exploitation of the individual by his fellows or society; against the encroachment of the “non-self”, organized or not, upon the “self”, associated or isolated, whatever that self is or has... against blind procreation, heedless of the future of the offspring, against racial hatred.

We are with those who struggle in all places for complete freedom of expression of thought — spoken, written, or illustrated; for absolute liberty of assembly, union, grouping, association and secession. We are for the intangible freedom of exposition, publicity, experiment and realization.

Whatever happens to be the end sought for, the purpose pursued, we oppose external control — statist or governmental — and all censure, restraint, constraint, or requisition, whether administrative, intellectual, economic, spiritual or moral, everywhere and at all times.

We are for individual responsibility and autonomy against the oppression of castes, classes and rulers.

We are for liberty and free agreement against authority and imposed rule. (We regard the economic question as a subsidiary one, but conceive any solution to it on the basis of this principle.)

From *Minus One* #2 April 1964

Anarchist Individualism as Life and Activity (1907)

To say that the anarchist movement embraces several tendencies is not to put forward anything new, it would be surprising if it were otherwise. Non-political, outside of parties, this movement owes its existence solely to the individual personalities of which it is composed. Since there is no a priori anarchist programme, since there are only anarchists, it follows that each one of those who call themselves anarchists has his own conception of anarchism. Persecutions, difficulties and conflicts of all kinds, demand that whoever professes anarchism should be possessed of a mentality which is out of the ordinary, which is reflective, and which is in a state of continual reaction against a society composed of people who, on the contrary, are not reflective and are inclined to accept ready-made doctrines which make no demands on their intelligence. To ask that all anarchists should have similar views on anarchism is to ask the impossible. Hence a wealth of diverging conceptions are to be found among them.

As the word “anarchy” etymologically signifies the negation of governmental authority, the absence of government, it follows that one indissoluble bond unites the anarchists. This is antagonism to all situations regulated by imposition, constraint, violence, governmental oppression, whether these are a product of all, a group, or of one person. In short, whoever denies that the intervention of government is for human relationships is an anarchist.

But this definition would have only a negative value did it not possess as a practical complement, a conscious attempt to live outside this domination and servility which are incompatible with the anarchist conception. An anarchist, therefore, is an individual who, whether he has been brought to it by a process of reasoning or by sentiment, lives to the greatest possible extent in a state of legitimate defense against authoritarian encroachments. From this it that anarchist individualism — the tendency which we believe contains the most profound realization of the anarchist idea — is not merely a philosophical doctrine — it is an attitude, an individual way of life.

The anarchist individualist is not simply converted intellectually to ideas which will be realized one day some centuries hence. He tries now — for the present is the only time which matters for him — to practice his conceptions in everyday life, in his relations with his comrades, and in his contact with those others who do not share his convictions.

All healthy organisms have a characteristic tendency to reproduce themselves. Organisms which are sick, or in a process of degeneration, have no such tendency — and this applies to the mind as well as the body. So the anarchist individualist tends to reproduce himself, to perpetuate his spirit in other individuals who will share his views and who will make it possible for a state

of affairs to be established from which authoritarianism has been banished. It is this desire, this will, not only to live, but also to reproduce oneself, which we shall call “activity”.

These considerations explain our title: “Anarchist Individualism as Life and Activity”. Tending to live his own individual life at the risk of clashing intellectually, morally, and economically, with his environment, the anarchist individualist at the same time tries to like himself, are free from the prejudices and superstitions of authority, in order that the greatest possible number of men may actually live their own lives, uniting through personal affinities to practice their conceptions as far as is possible.

The anarchist individualist does not live in intellectual isolation. As individuals who share his ideas increase in number, so will his chances improve of seeing his aspirations realized, and as a result he will be happier. As individuals of his own “species” increase, so will the power of environment over his own life diminish. The wider his propaganda spreads and the more his activity grows, the more will his life be intensified.

His relationships with his comrades are based on reciprocity. on mutualism, on comradeship, and take numerous forms, all voluntary: free agreements of every type and in all spheres; respect for the pledged word and the carrying out of promises and engagements freely consented to. It is in this fashion that the individualist of our kind practices mutual aid in his species.

A conscious individual — seeking to create and select others — from being determined by his environment, he tends to become self-determining, to live his own life fully, to be active in the normal sense of the word. One cannot conceive the anarchist individualist in any other way.

In the first place, then, the anarchist is — in relation to all social conceptions based upon constraint — an individual who negates; anarchism is an individualist concept and a product of individuals. The anarchist is naturally an individualist.

The legalists base society upon law. In the eyes of the law those who constitute society are no more than ciphers. Whether the law proceeds from one man alone (autocracy), from several (oligarchy), or from the majority of the members of a society (democracy), the citizen must suppress even his most rightful aspirations before it. The legalists maintain that if the individual subjects himself to the law, which allegedly emanates from society, it is in the interests of society and in his own interest since he is a member of society.

Indeed, society as we know it can be summarized as follows: The ruling classes, through the intermediary of the State, ensure that only their own views on culture, morality and economic conditions, are allowed to penetrate to the masses. They set up their own views in the form of civil dogmas, which no man may violate under pain of punishment, just as in former times, during the reign of the Church, there were severe penalties for daring to challenge religious dogmas. The State — the laic form of the Church — has replaced the Church which was the religious form of the State — but the aim of both has always been to form, not free beings, but true believers or perfect citizens. In other words slaves to dogma or law.

The anarchist replies that when solidarity is imposed from without it is worthless; that when a contract is enforced there is no longer any question of rights or duties; that coercion releases him from the bonds which attach him to a so-called society whose executives he knows only in the guise of administrators, law-givers, judges and policemen; that he supports only the solidarity of his everyday relationships. Fictitious and imposed solidarity is worthless solidarity.

The socialists base society upon economics. According to them the whole of life resolves itself into a question of production and consumption. Once you solve this problem you will automatically solve the human problem, with its complexity of intellectual and moral experiences. The

individual may be conscious, he may be the greatest drunkard or the worst of comrades, but he is only of interest when considered as a producer or a consumer. The call goes out to all — to those who think and to those who do not. All have a right to the collectivist banquet, all have the right to the result of effort without to attempt the effort. It is necessary only to unite and to grasp the power that will permit the seizure of society, and as soon as society has been seized, collectivism will be established and will function, willy-nilly, since any recalcitrants will be compelled to obey, otherwise they will disappear from circulation.

Socialism has been called the “religion of economics” and it is certain that a socialist metaphysic exists. This doctrine teaches that all the products of human activity are governed by economics. This is by no means difficult to grasp and is within the ability of every mentality. From the moment of its triumph socialism, in all its various shades, demands of its adherent that he be a good producer and a no less good consumer, putting his trust with regard to the organization of production and consumption in the wisdom of delegates, whether elected or imposed. Socialism is not concerned to make him an individual — it will make him an official.

The anarchist bases society neither upon the law nor upon economics. Good citizen, good bureaucrat, good producer, good consumer — this flour-spattered meal-trough has no message for him. After all, if it can be proved that in certain cases economics have determined intellect or morals, can it not also be proved that intellect or morals have often determined economics? And one should not pass in silence the role of the sexual factor.

The real truth must surely be that they mingle with and jostle one another; that they alternate and are mutually determined. From reformist socialism to revolutionary anti-parliamentary communism via trade unionism, all these socialist systems make a mockery of the individual and of free agreement between individuals. They give pride of place to the majority, to the economic contract imposed by the greatest number.

The anarchist proclaims that a transformation in mental outlook will always be accompanied by a transformation in the economic system; that a new social edifice cannot be built with stones that are crumbling into dust, that beings who have been molded by prejudice can never build anything but a structure filled with prejudice, that it is necessary first of all to lay down solid materials, to select individuals.

If he joins a trades union, regardless of its colour, the anarchist enters it purely as a member of a particular trade, in the hope of obtaining by collective action an improvement in his own lot — but he will see nothing anarchistic in gaining a wage increase, or a reduction of working hours. From an economic point of view, under present conditions, each anarchist does what he thinks best for himself, one by working for a boss, another by acting outside the law: one benefits from the advantages obtained by association, another by participating in a “free milieu”, yet another by satisfying his needs as an artisan. None of these ways of getting by are more “anarchist” than the others — they are makeshifts, sometimes “evasions”, neither more nor less.

Since the anarchist conception places the individual at the base of all these practical consequences, it follows that it takes no heed of collective morality and the general pattern of life. The anarchist regulates his life not according to the law, like the legalists, nor according to a given collective metaphysic or mystique, like the religious, the nationalists or the socialists, for example, but according to his own needs and personal aspirations. He is ready to make the concessions necessary to live with his comrades or his friends, but without making an obsession of these concessions.

The anarchist knows full well that if his life is to be enjoyed to the full, if it is to be beautiful and rich in every kind of experience he will not be able to appreciate it if he is unable to master his inclinations and passions. He has no intention of turning his life into a sort of English garden, carefully cultivated, monotonous and dismal. No, he wants to live fully and intensely, he attaches a thousand horses to his chariot, but he does not forget to put a bridle on the neck of each one. The anarchist denies authority because he knows he can live without it. He is guided by the play of agreements freely entered into with his comrades, never trampling on the liberty of any of them in order that none may trample on his.

But in relation to those whose amorphism, ignorance or interest interferes with his living his life, the individualist feels himself a stranger. Moreover, inwardly he remains refractory — fatally refractory — morally, intellectually, economically (The capitalist economy and the directed economy, the speculators and the fabricators of single are equally repugnant to him.) The full consciousness that none of his acts can debase him inwardly is for him a sufficient criterion. Surely the essential thing is that he remains himself?

Again, is not the anarchist constantly in a state of legitimate self-defense against constraint and social servitude?

Anarchist work, activity, and propaganda, therefore, do not consist of swaying the crowd, but of creating and selecting — my repetition is intentional — conscious individuals, free from prejudice. It is above all a work of undermining, of irony, of criticism, a work of education, but also a work of reconstruction, of the sculpting of a personality free from dominant Spooks. A work of free examination and of independent research in all fields. Instead of talking of love in general, the anarchist talks simply of unity and alliance between comrades, between friends, who fed attracted to each other by affinities of one kind or another, by reciprocity. Instead of postponing individual happiness to the socialist or communist calends, he extols his present achievement of it by proclaiming the joy of living.

Instead of building the great structure of Harmony with material taken at random from the rubble amid the ruins of former buildings, he shows that the first task to be done is to remove the stones one by one from the great human arena.

Anarchists no more want to be masters than they want to be servants — they no more want to exercise violence than to submit to it. They expose, they propose, but they do not impose. They are pioneers attached to no party, non-conformists, standing outside herd morality and conventional “good” and “evil” “a-social”. a “species” apart, one might say. They go forward, stumbling, sometimes falling, sometimes triumphant, sometimes vanquished. But they do go forward, and by living for themselves, these “egoists”, they dig the furrow, they open the breach through which will pass those who deny anarchism, the unique ones who will succeed them.

Adapted from an English version by N.G.

Property

In present society property is only the privilege of a small minority, compared to the multitude of the working classes. Whatever may be the nature of the object possessed — a field, a house, plant for production, cash, etc. its owner has acquired it either by exploiting others, or by inheritance, and in the latter case the origin of the wealth is the same as in the former.

Moreover, what do the owners of this wealth do with it? Some use it to obtain, in exchange, a life of leisure, to taste all sorts of pleasures to which money gives sole access. These are the idlers, the parasites who excuse themselves from all personal effort and merely rely on that of others. To develop their estates, for example, or their farms, they employ a labor force which they pay inadequately and which, while it provides all the toil, does not reap any real gain, does not receive the full wage for its work. If it is a question of personal estate, the capital is used for statist ends, or for undertakings of capitalist exploitation. Whoever owns more than he needs for his own consumption, or more than he can develop by himself — such a man, either directly, by developing his properties, or organizing industrial concerns, or indirectly, by entrusting his capital to industry or the State, is an exploiter of others work.

Then again, it happened in the course of history, that the size of certain estates prevented their full and rational development, and that, while there were workers without jobs and families with nowhere to live, vast areas lay fallow through lack of good organization.

It is against this bourgeois property, recognized by the State, and jealously guarded by it, that all revolutionaries rise up, all those who propagate liberating ideas, and whose ambition it is to improve the living condition of the mass. It is this, that socialists, communists, and anti-Statists of every shade attack and wish to destroy. It is this which, on the other hand, breeds illegalism — theft, instinctive and brutal in some cases, conscious and calculated in others.

Communism has solved the problem by taking away capital and the means of production from the State in order to restore it to the collectivity which has become sovereign in its turn, and which distributes the proceeds to each, according to his effort. (*EA Means anarcho communism ed.*)

But, whether property be in the hands of the State, of the collectivity, or of the communist milieu, or of a few capitalists, as at the present time, it makes the individual dependent upon the community, it breeds the master and the slave, the leaders and the led. Kept in economic submission, the worker retains a mentality in keeping with his conditions of dependence. He is, strictly speaking, the tool, the instrument, the productive machine of his exploiter — individual or social — it is difficult, in such conditions, to be a fully developed and aware individual.

Let us come now to the individualist viewpoint, which wants the free expansion of the individual ego. Individualism looks at the matter in a different light and brings a solution which does not intend that the individual should be sacrificed to a machine. It claims, above all, for every worker the inalienable possession of his means of production, of whatever kind it may be — tools, land, books etc. These means of production can belong to an association or to an individual — that depends on what agreements are made.

The great thing is that the tools, whatever they may be, should be the property of the producer or producers, and not of the State, big firms, or the milieu in which circumstances have caused the individual to be born.

Moreover, it is essential that the worker should dispose freely, according to his will and necessities of the product of his labour. He should not have to suffer any outside interference in the use which he means to make of it. The individual or association ought to be able, without having to take into consideration anybody else whatsoever, to consume its own output, or exchange it either gratis or for something else, and furthermore, it should be open to it to choose those with whom it will exchange its products and what it will receive in their stead.

Once the individual owns his own tools and his product, capitalism ceases to exist. And from this transformation of the conditions of work, the individual will get something besides economic

betterment; he will derive a benefit from the ethical point of view. Instead of being the wage-earners, the exploited victim of employers, endowed in consequence with a “couldn’t care less” attitude toward the making of the product because he does not enjoy it, and wanting to spare his efforts because another will profit by it, the individualist producer will take an interest in his work, will seek unceasingly to perfect it, to make new improvements and use his initiative. He will gain self respect from the work he does, a healthy personal satisfaction and such a lively interest that his work will no longer be drudgery but a source of exhilaration. The same taste for work, the same struggle against routine and monotony will be found in all trades and activities — a taste which at the present time is only the privilege of a minority, more often than not intellectuals, artists, scholars, writers: all those who work under the impulse of a vocation of a definite choice.

Property thus understood and applied, no longer has anything common with “property is theft”; it marks a stage of evolution and it seemingly must be at the bottom of complete emancipation, of liberation from all authorities. It will be a restoration of creative power to the individual according to his abilities, properly understood.

It stands to reason that agreements can be made between consumer-producers to avoid over-production, by which would be meant (speculation having disappeared) the surplus of production after the needs of the producer had been covered or once, through the play of exchange, those needs had been satisfied. Speculation and exploitation having disappeared, there is no evidence that accumulation holds out more dangers than under communism. To tell the truth, whether it be a question of communism or of individualism, their economic realization in practical terms cannot be separated from a new mentality, from a self-consciousness removing the need for anarchist control by whatever name it is called.

Anti-authoritarian individualism, in whichever sphere one can imagine it, is a function of the entire absence of control or supervision, both of which lead back to the practice of authority

Minus One 10 Sept 1965 Translated by Francis Ellingham

Individualist Perspectives

The anarchist individualists do not present themselves as proletarians, absorbed only in the search for material amelioration, tied to a class determined to transform the world and to substitute a new society for the actual one. They place themselves in the present; they disdain to orient the coming generations towards a form of society allegedly destined to assure their happiness, for the simple reason that from the individualist point of view happiness is a conquest, an individuals internal realization.

Even if I believed in the efficacy of a universal social transformation, according to a well-defined system, without direction, sanction, or obligation, I do not see by what right I could persuade others that it is the best. For example, I want to live in a society from which the last vestige of authority has disappeared, but, to speak frankly, I am not certain that the “mass”, to call it what it is, is capable of dispensing with authority. I want to live in a society in which the members think by and for themselves, but the attraction which is exercised on the mass by publicity, the press, frivolous reading and by State-subsidized distractions is such that I ask myself whether men will ever be able to reflect and judge with an independent mind. I may be told in reply that the solution of the social question will transform every man into a sage. This is

a gratuitous affirmation, the more so as there have been sages under all regimes. Since I do not know the social form which is most likely to create internal harmony and equilibrium in social unity, I refrain from theorizing.

When “voluntary association” is spoken of, voluntary adhesion to a plan, a project, a given action, this implies the possibility of refusing the association, adhesion or action. Let us imagine the planet submitted to a single social or economic life; how would I exist if this system did not please me? There remains to me only one expedient: to integrate or to perish. It is held that, “the social question” having been solved, there is no longer a place for non-conformism, recalcitrance, etc... but it is precisely when a question has been resolved that it is important to pose new ones or to return to an old solution, if only to avoid stagnation.

If there is a “Freedom” standing over and above all individuals, it is surely nothing more than the expression of their thoughts, the manifestation and diffusion of their opinions. The existence of a social organization founded on a single ideological unity interdicts all exercise of freedom of speech and of ideologically contrary thought. How would I be able to oppose the dominant system, proposing another, supporting a return to an older system, if the means of making my view-point known or of publicizing my critiques were in the possession of the agents of the regime in power? This regime must either accept reproach when compared to other social solutions superior to its own, or, despite its termination in “ist”, it is no better than any other regime. Either it will admit opposition, secession, schism, fractionalism, competition, or nothing will distinguish it significantly from a dictatorship. This “ist” regime would undoubtedly claim that it has been invested with its power by the masses, that it does not exercise its power or control except by the delegation of assemblies or congresses; but as long as it did not allow the intransigents and refractories to express the reasons for their attitude and for their corresponding behaviour, it would be only a totalitarian system. The material benefits on which a dictatorship prides itself are of no importance. Regardless of whether there is scarcity or abundance, a dictatorship is always a dictatorship.

It is asked of me why I call my individualism “anarchist individualism”? Simply because the State concretizes the best organized form of resistance to individual affirmation. What is the State? An organism which bills itself as representative of the social body, to which power is allegedly delegated, this power expressing the will of an autocrat or of popular sovereignty. This power has no reason for existing other than the maintenance of the extant social structure. But individual aspirations are unable to come to term with the existence of the State, personification of Society, for, as Palante says: “All society is and will be exploitative, usurpacious, dominating, and tyrannical. This it is not by accident but by essence.” Yet the individualist would be neither exploited, usurped, dominated, tyrannized nor dispossessed of his sovereignty. On the other hand, Society is able to exercise its constraint on the individual only thanks to the support of the State, administrator and director of the affairs of Society. No matter which way he turns the individual encounters the State or its agents of execution, who do not care in the least whether the regulations which they enforce concur or not with the diversity of temperaments of the subjects upon whom they are administered. From their aspirations as from their demands, the individualists of our school have eliminated the State. That is why they call themselves “anarchists”.

But we deceive ourselves if we imagine that the individualists of our school are anarchists (*an-archy*, etymologically, man's only negation of the state, and does not pertain to other matters) only in relation to the State — such as the western democracies or the totalitarian systems. This point cannot be overemphasized. Against all that which is power, that is, economic as well as

political domination, esthetic as well as intellectual, scientific as well as ethical, the individualists rebel and form such fronts as they are able, alone or in voluntary association. In effect, a group or federation can exercise power as absolute as any State if it accepts in a given field all the possibilities of activity and realization.

The only social body in which it is possible for an individualist to evolve and develop is that which admits a concurrent plurality of experiences and realizations, to which is opposed all groupings founded on an ideological exclusiveness, which, well-meant though they may be, threaten the integrity of the individual from the moment that this exclusiveness aims to extend itself to the non-adherents of the grouping. To call this anti-statist would be doing no more than provoking a mask for an appetite for driving a herd of human sheep.

I have said above that it is necessary to insist on this point. For example, anarchist communism denies, rejects and expels the State from its ideology; but it resuscitates it the moment that it substitutes social organization for personal judgment. If anarchist individualism thus has in common with anarchist communism the political negation of the State, of the "Arche", it only marks a point of divergence. Anarchist communism places itself on the economic plane, on the terrain of the class struggle, united with syndicalism, etc. (this is its right), but anarchist individualism situates itself on the psychological plane, and on that of resistance to social totalitarianism, which is something entirely different. (Naturally, anarchist individualism follows the many paths of activity and education: philosophy, literature, ethics, etc., but I have wanted to make precise here only some points of our attitude to the social environment.) I do not deny that this is not very new, but it is taking a position to which it is good to return from time to time.

(First published in the Bulletin of SIA, 1957, This translation by Richard DeHaan first appeared in Views and Comments, No. 25, New York)

The Little Manual of Individualist Anarchism

The anarchist is the enemy of the state and all its institutions which maintain or perpetuate the submission of the individual. There is no possibility of reconciliation between the anarchist and any form of society based upon authority, whether an aristocracy or a democracy... He is the adversary of monopoly and privilege, whether of an intellectual, moral or economic nature. Briefly, he is the irreconcilable antagonist of all regimes, of all social systems, of everything that implies the domination of man or the group over the individual and the exploitation of the individual by another or by the group. Anarchist thought above all, takes the form of a critique.

The anarchist sows revolt against those who fetter free expression. He clears the mind of pre-conceived ideas, frees those mentalities enchained by fear and aids those who have already been emancipated from social conventions...

An abyss separates anarchism from socialism and all its different aspects, including trade unionism, for the anarchist places first and foremost in his concept of life the individual act. And for this reason it is called individualist anarchism.

He does not think the evils that humanity suffers from come exclusively from capitalism or private property. In a group, human beings think in a flawed manner. Masters cannot exist without slaves nor the gods without worshippers. The individualist anarchist has no interest in a violent revolution which has for its goal the transformation of the mode of distribution of goods in a communist or collectivist manner, yet does not lead to a change in the general mentality and

which does not lead to the emancipation of the individual person. Under communism he will be subordinated to the will of the group. The anarchist will remain as poor and miserable as now. Instead of being under the yoke of the capitalist minority, he will be dominated by the collective. He will be a producer, a consumer, but never an autonomous individual.

The individualist anarchist differs from the anarchist communist in the sense that he considers (aside from the objects of pleasure which form an extension of the personality) property as a means of production and the free disposition of its product as the essential guarantee of individual autonomy.

Taken from *En Dehors* Web Site (trans. L. Gambone)

Life and Society

The Anarchist Individualists wish to live their own lives in spite of and even against society. To this, the main objection of some people is that whether or not the Anarchist Individualists wish it they still remain an integral part of the group they repudiate and without which they could not subsist.

Even as the judge, the businessman, and the prostitute, the Individualist is not outside this environment but plainly in the midst of it. He relishes the same joys and experiences the identical sufferings as do his neighbors. He consumes their production and produces for their consumption. He could not even do without other men's efforts, whereas they could easily do without his. Like everyone else he fulfills the functions that preserve and perpetuate the species. In a word, nothing, as an Anarchist Individualist, makes him differ from his fellowmen..

Now, at first glance it would appear difficult to contest the validity of such reasoning. But with a spark of reflection we realize that the argument attributes to society conceptions that simply depend on life; the latter is too much confounded with organized society. People fail to recognize the great power inherent in life itself; they ignore the fact that the very complex living organisms subsist wonderfully well without organized society, as man himself has done in the past.

Indeed to breathe, move, and reproduce are all phenomena which have nothing to do with the existence of organized groups. Nowadays man does not conceive of individual existence without social function. Still, in relation to life, society is merely an artificial appendage. Many forms of society have disappeared, but their disappearance has never stopped life, for it has endlessly persisted even when continents have sunken away.

It is axiomatic that in order to grow and develop himself the fiercest Anarchist Individualist needed "society". He needed it at an age when his character had not yet affirmed itself and when he could neither reason nor draw up any kind of appreciation. Later on — the cause does not matter — he became a negator of authority and exploitation. Yet, because he found himself face to face with a social contract based essentially upon authority and exploitation, does it follow that he is in any way a debtor to the organization which imposed it upon him?

Besides what is this organization? An agglomeration of facts and institutions having for its object the maintenance of the individual in constant subjection and his detention in an enclosure of moral conventions and economic servitude. True enough, members of society have sometimes intellectually, morally and economically revolted against it. Although the Anarchist Individualists have (at least some of them) profited by what these ancestors or forerunners had accomplished or written, they are in no way indebted to them; for it is a fact that these pioneers found in their

activity the only reward they were entitled to expect. "Society" if we are not mistaken means factories, jails, armories, toilers' dwellings, prostitution houses, drinking joints, gambling places, manufacturers of asphyxiating gases and big business.

"Society", no doubt, is the crowd that screams "Hurrah!" at the parade of the crippled from the last general slaughter; it is the long line of hungry men and women in front of missions; it is also he who takes his hat off when the flag-bearer goes by and who goes to the circus only when it calls for a sensational and risky stunt. And to such society, the Anarchist Individualist must render account? Well, factories, big stores, exchanges, totalizers, monstrous guns, aeroplanes, churches, mansions, and all that civilization has produced for the development of the milieu of which we are a part, could disappear and nevertheless life would still continue.

The life which the Anarchist Individualist wants to live has no relation to the known social life as we know it. The Anarchist Individualist leads the existence imposed upon him by the environment because he is compelled, forced and constrained. just as the prisoner wishes the disappearance of his jailers — so does the Anarchist Individualist wish to see society sink; for it impedes him, narrows his horizon, encumbers his forward movement and renders him a perpetual slave. No matter what his actions are, in the last resort, they always tend to screen him from the haughty arrogance of the social milieu, or tend to reduce the latter to pieces, which amounts to the same thing.

Unless he be a fool, the prosperity and future outcome of the "social life" do not bother the Anarchist Individualist; it is enough for him to feel and endure its restraint and tyranny. Life, and life alone attracts him; to live "in freedom" that strongly contrasts with the existence imposed upon him by the economic, political and social conditions. It is life that interests him, solicits, enlivens and lures him. The "natural" life, the one which ignores compromises, adulteration, glitter, deception, overcharged reputation, calculation, and climbing... in a word, all that characterizes social life, everything which perpetuates "society". Between "society" and life the Anarchist Individualist chooses the latter, wishing to live in spite of all external pressures and forever excluding domination and exploitation of others.

English version by Jules Scarceriaux.

Our Kind of Individualist (1945)

Essentially, our paper is intended for a certain category of people only, a select body, distinct from the general run of society, who, in default of a better term, must be referred to as "our kind of individualist" and who are, it must be understood, the only variety of individualist we are interested in. This sort of person is invariably a "non-conformist" with regard to the ethics and aesthetics of the bourgeoisie, the present system of education, and, indeed, with most majority opinions in society. He has taken due thought, and has jettisoned all those phantoms, those abstract principles which had haunted him when he floated back and forth on the tides of convention, carried along like 'a cork on such currents as "everybody does it", as the conformer must be. He has created for himself a personality which resists the influences surrounding it, which pays no attention to the vociferous, the braggart, or the fickle mob. He wants to know where he is going, though not without having carefully considered the route to be followed, and then without ever losing sight of the fact that his "freedom" must always be dependent upon his "responsibility".

What else is “our” individualist? He is a person who is united with those of “his world” by comradeship, which we define as “a voluntary agreement between individualists aimed at eliminating all avoidable friction and unpleasantness from their relationships”. Now this definition is more than twenty years old, dating from 1924, and in 1939 I again wrote: “Our conception of comradeship is positive, not negative, constructive, not destructive.” It is because such an idea is creative of good will, contentment and harmony that it will tend to reduce to a minimum the pain of living, and this in a society which is in itself indifferent. “And all this can be achieved without the, protection of the State, the intervention of governments, or the mediation of the law.”

But our kind of individualist is not only mind, spirit, thought. He is neither dry, nor niggardly of heart. If exclusively a rationalist, he would feel himself incomplete, so it is a necessity for him to be both sensible and “sentimental”. This explains his plan for freeing “his world” of useless and avoidable suffering. He knows that this is possible when one speaks and understands “the language of the heart”, when one prefers agreement to struggle, abstention to the unlatching of actions dictated by bitterness, animosity or spite. Individualism as we conceive and propagate it is understood seriously, without equivocation, passionately. It postulates rectitude, constancy, reciprocity, support, comprehensiveness, indeed compassion. It implies fidelity to the pledged word, whatever the matter in hand may be; care not to interfere under any pretext in the affairs of another comrade (unless asked), or to encroach on his rights, nor to withdraw any rights once given except in cases of betrayed trust. This individualism does not wish to provoke disquiet, disillusionment, torment or tears. Its freedom of affirmation must cease when it threatens another with hardship or pain.

Our kind of individualist must not be misunderstood. He is no moralist. He loathes “conventional lies”, the false pretenses of petite-bourgeoisie. He has discarded all preconceived ideas. he recognizes as a motive nothing outside himself. But he knows quite well that an individualist must give as well as take. He does not ignore the fact that the “gentleman’s agreement” must be honoured equally with the formal bond. He repudiates violence, imposition, constraint, which is not to say that he accepts being exploited, duped, made a game of or inferior, whatever his personal appearance or level of culture might be. He does not wish to receive more than he gives, nor give more than he receives. He is proud. He sets a value upon his person. It means nothing to him that anyone else knows him only as a “poor relation”. Towards those who would humiliate him he reacts and considers himself in a state of legitimate defense ... but he is always ready to make peace on a man to man basis.

Yes, our kind of individualism loves life. It makes no secret of it—it revels in the joy of living, but in a discreet manner, without din or noisy demonstrations. It recognizes happiness as its goal. It welcomes anything that will increase its receptiveness and appreciation for either the products of the human imagination or those of nature. No asceticism, it is repelled by mortification. It is conscious of personal dignity. It can both sow and reap. It pays no attention to what “they say.., It is neither young nor old, it is the age it feels its self to be. And while there is a drop of blood left in its veins, it will fight for a place in the sun.

But this joy, the enjoyment of living, the conquest of a life without prejudice, the individualist does not intend to gain at the expense of others, whether his friends or comrades, or only the most humble and least important person in his society. He refuses to play the role of trouble-maker — he would not be the cause of any grief for anyone. He ‘abhors the idea that one of

the members of his circle should be in any way frustrated on account of his ambitions-on has account. He could never pardon himself for such conduct.

Nor does he wish to have anything in common with those armchair Nietzscheans or weekend Stirnerites who imagine, poor wretches, that they are “affirming their individuality” by petty dishonesty in money matters, or by forcing themselves upon the companion of a friend in prison. In short, the individualist, as we know him, abominates brutes, cretins, rogues, schemers, twisters, skunks and so forth, no matter with what ideology they wish to conceal themselves. But he also recognizes that practice does not always conform to theory, and that often, though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. He holds nothing against his associates on account of their inabilities or their weaknesses; he freely forgives them. Concessions are not rarities with him. And any damage he does, or suffering he causes, he will pay for or rectify to the best of his ability. But further than that he will not go — anything beyond compensation is extortion.

In the midst of a social order in which, despite frequent pompous discourses and bombastic declarations from allegedly responsible persons, the pledged word is more often broken than not and the philosophy of “get out of your problems as best you can” is the reigning attitude of man to his fellowman, our conception of comradeship, as described above, raises itself like a lighthouse to remind the world that there are still persons capable of resisting the seductions and gross appetites of our philistine society.

We believe that our kind of individualism has a bigger following than might at first sight appear, and that, though scattered, there is a not inconsiderable number of persons who are trying to reintegrate themselves on these lines; people who have revolted against social determinism and who have decided to submit an ideas to their own personal tests. These people we look upon as a psychological group apart from those who remain in the mass. To them our call goes out.

We look at “association” as a concrete manifestation of comradeship taking some co-operative or mutualist form, always providing that it is based on a sound understanding of the participants character We know perfectly well that if in this association our personality affirms its self that if the goal sought for is attained, it is at the cost of our “liberty”. When he associates our kind of individualist accents the disadvantages along with the advantages and he does not complain.

Adopted from a translation of A Qui Est Destiné “L’Unique” by A.S.

The Future Society (1945)

Individualists concern themselves little with a future society. That idea has been exploited and can nourish the believer just as exploitation of paradise nourishes the priest; but it resembles paradise, in that a description of its wonders has an enervating, soporific influence on those who hear it, it makes them forget present oppression, tyranny and bondage. it weakens energy, emasculates initiative. The individualist does not put his hope in the future society. He lives in the present moment, and he wants to draw from it the maximum results. Individualist activity is essentially a present work and a present accomplishment. The individualist knows that the present is heir to the past and pregnant with the future. It is not in some tomorrow that he wants to see the end of encroachment by society on the individual, of invasion and oppression of one person by another. It is today, in has own life, that the individualist wants to win his independence.

To be sure, the individualist often fails in his attempts to free himself from the yoke of existing domination. Considering the forces of opposition and oppression, this is very natural. But the future will profit automatically from what he gains. The individualist knows very well that he will not explore the whole forest, but the path he opens will remain, and those who follow him, if they want to, will take good care of it and broaden it.

The individualist is incapable, it is true, of outlining in full detail the map of “future humanity” as it would be if his demands were won. Thus he cannot make a topographical work; but on the other hand he can foresee with certainty both the nature of the terrain and the quality of the liquid that will fill the rivers, and the possible kind of culture. “The new humanity” is not for him absolutely *terra incognita*. The individualist can, therefore, even now indicate what a “future humanity” will be. He knows it will resemble the present world in nothing less by changes in detail than by a complete transformation of the general mentality, a different understanding of relations among men, a universal and individual change of state of mind, that will make certain methods and certain institutions impossible.

Thus the individualist can affirm with certainty that authoritarianism will in no case continue in the future society. To imagine a “world to come” where there would still be a trace of domination, coercion and duty is nonsense.

The individualist is sure that there will no longer be room for intervention of the State — of a governmental, social-legislative, penal, disciplinary institution or administration — in the thought, conduct and activity of human beings. The individualist knows that relations and agreements among men will be arrived at voluntarily; understandings and contracts will be for a specified purpose and time, and not obligatory; they will always be subject to termination; there will not be a clause or an article of an agreement or contract that will not be weighed and discussed before being agreed to, a unilateral contract, obliging someone to fill an engagement he has not personally and knowingly accepted, will be impossible. The individualist knows that no economic, political or religious majority — no social group whatever — will be able to compel a minority, or one single man, to conform against his will to its decisions or decrees.

We have here a whole series of certainties on which there is no quibbling. “Future humanity”, as the individualist conceives it, “unrolls itself” without terminal station, without point of arrival. It is eternally becoming, indefinitely evolving. A humanity of the dynamic type, if one can so express oneself, ignores stops en route; or if there are stops at stations, it understands that this is the time strictly necessary to let off those who want to try an experience that will involve only them.

The future humanity, “the new humanity”, as the individualists understand it, constitutes a gigantic arena where, as much in thought and custom as in technique, all imaginable projects, plans, associations and practices will struggle and compete with each other. It is because of these well-established characteristics that “the new humanity” in no way resembles, can have no meeting-point with ours, “the old humanity”. It will be poly-dynamic, polymorphous, multilateral.

When someone asks exactly how, in “the future humanity” that individualists want, one will solve some litigious point, it is clear that the questioner does not understand. But one can reply with certainty that there will never be a recourse to violence, compulsion or force to adjust a difference.

A good number of individualists think that the coming of “the future humanity” that individualists want, depends on an attack, on serious, rational and continued propaganda, against authoritarianism in all spheres of human activity, whether in political or social economy, in

morals, in art, in science, in literature. Arguing from the fact that the individual is born into — is thrust into — an already-organized society without being allowed to consent to it or reject it, or able to defend himself from it or oppose it, they deduce that this primordial fact confers on the victim the right to life, without restrictions or reservations. That is, the right to consumption, independent of economic politics; the right to individual choice of the method of production and the means of production; the right to choose the consumers he wants to benefit by his exchange; the right to choose whether to associate with others, and, if he refuses to associate, the right to the means of production sufficient to maintain himself; the right to choose his associates and the purpose for which he associates.

In other words, the right to behave as he finds most advantageous, at his own risk, with no limit other than encroachment on the behavior of others (to put it another way, the use of violence, compulsion or coercion towards one who behaves differently than you). The right to the guarantee that he will not be forced to do what he considers personally disagreeable or disadvantageous, or hindered from doing what he wants to (he will not, therefore, resort to physical force, deceit or fraud in order to gain what appears useful, advantageous or agreeable to him). The right to circulate freely, to move wherever he pleases, to propagate those doctrines, opinions, propositions and them that he feels impelled to, with the reservation of not using violence in any form to put them into practice; the right to experiment in all fields and all forms, to publicize his experiences, to recruit the associates needed for their realization, on condition that only those who really want to will participate and that those who no longer want to can withdraw; the right to consumption and to means of production, even if he refuses to participate in any system, method or institution that seems to him disadvantageous. The right to life, that is, the right to make one's own happiness as one feels impelled to, alone or together with those one feels particularly attracted to, without fear of intervention or intrusion by personalities or organizations incompatible with one's ego or with the association of which one is momentarily part.

The individualists think that the guarantee of the right to life, thus conceived, is the least a human individual can demand when he realizes what an authoritarian and arbitrary act was committed in bringing him into the world. They think also that all propaganda for these demands favors the advent of a transformed mentality, characteristic of all new humanity. The struggle for the abolition of the monopoly of the State, or of any other executive form replacing it — against its intervention as centralizer, administrator, regulator, moderator, organizer or otherwise in any relation among individuals equally favors, these individualists think, the emergence of this mentality.

I am aware that a good number of anarchist individualists have no interest in the “future humanity”. For them: “Without risk of erring too far, we can assume: 1. That there will never be a general, collective, life from which authority, is absolutely excluded; 2. That in all societies there will be individuals or groups who are protestants, malcontents, critics and negators. Without doubt, we will witness transformations, improvements, modifications, even upheavals. The capitalist system of production may vanish in the end, gradually or forcibly. Little by little, one will work less, earn more; reforms will come, menacingly, inevitably. There may be an economic regime unlike ours. But whatever the social system, good sense indicates that its permanence depends on a system of regulation adapted to the average mentality of the people in it. Whether they want to, or not, those to the right or left of the average regulation must conform their behavior to it; and it matters little whether its basis is exclusively economic, or biological, or moral.

“Experience indicates that towards refractories they will use the only arguments men can dispose — of: politics or violence, persuasion or compulsion, bargaining or command. The crowd always goes towards him who speaks well and carries himself well. Its angers last no longer than its admirations. It is always easy to fool and seduce. One can no more base oneself on it now than a century or a thousand years ago. The mass belongs to the strongest, the most superficial, the most slippery. In such a situation, what do anarchist individualists do, what will they do?

1. Some reply that they will remain within the milieu and struggle to affirm themselves — without concerning themselves too much with choice of means, for their great concern — the concern of their lives — is, at all costs, to react against external determination of their lives. It is to affirm oneself if not to diminish the pressure of the milieu on oneself. They are reactors, refractories, propagandists, revolutionaries, utilizing all possible means of battle: education, violence, ruse, illegalism. They seize occasions when the Power is abusive to stir up rebelliousness among its victims. But it is for pleasure that they act, and not for the profit of the sufferers, or by abusing them by vain words. They go, they come, mingling in a movement or withdrawing, as their independence is or is not in danger of restriction, parting company with those they have called to revolt as soon as they pretend to follow them or constitute themselves a party. Perhaps they do, more than they are.
2. Others situate themselves on the margin of the milieu. Having somehow obtained means of production, they preoccupy themselves with making their separation from the milieu a reality, trying to produce enough for themselves, while eliminating the factitious and the surplus. “Because men, in general, seem to them hardly worth bothering about, they maintain only the minimum relations with people and human institutions, and their social life is limited to the company of selected ‘comrades of ideas’. They group together at times, but only temporarily, and the limited association of which they are part is never delegated power to dispose of their product. The rest of the world exists for them only little or much — to the extent that they need it. Perhaps they are, more than they do.

“Between these two conceptions of individualist life, the diverse anarchist individualist temperaments range themselves.” For the comrades whose opinions I have just transcribed, any sketch of “future humanity”, any hypothesis of an individualist milieu, is a work of imagination, pure literary fantasy. They maintain that, for the mentality, the general will, really to transform itself, it would be necessary that “the species on the road to degeneration, the ‘directed categories’, deliver the earth of their presence: and that is not likely.” It was only justice to make known this point of view that no individualist forgets, even when he speaks of becoming social.

For having depicted in broad strokes a tableau of “the new humanity” to which we would like to evolve, we cannot be taxed with being “future-society-ists”. The anarchist individualist is not a future society-ist; a presentist, he could not, without bad reasoning and illogic, think of sacrificing his being, or his having, to the coming of a state of things he will not immediately enjoy. Individualist thought admits no equivocation on this point. It is amid the old humanity, the humanity of dominators and dictators of all kinds, that the “new humanity” appears, takes shape, becomes. Individualists are permanent and personal revolutionaries, they try to practice, in themselves, in their circle, in their relations with their comrades of ideas, their particular concepts of individual and group life. Every time one of the characteristics of the “new humanity” implants itself in the mores, every time one or more human beings, at their risk and peril, anticipate them

by word or action, “the new humanity is realized.” In the domain of art, letters, science, ethics, personal conduct, even in the economic sphere, one finds individuals who think and act contrary to the customs, usages, routines, prejudices and conventions of the “old society”, and attempt to break them down. In their kind of activity, they too represent the new humanity. Already the individualists take part in it, by their way of behaving towards the old world, because they reveal in each of their actions their intention, their win, their hope of seeing the individual free himself from the constraint of the herd, the mentality of the mass.

Can one hope that after many a flux and reflux, many a sad attempt, humanity will some day come to conscientious practice of reciprocity, to the anti-authoritarian, individualist — anarchist individualist — solution, the solution of equal liberty?

Can one anticipate that, more enlightened, more educated, better informed, the inhabitants of our planet will at last come to understand that neither coercion, nor domination of the majority, the elite, the dictatorship of an autocrat, class or caste, are capable of assuring happiness — that is, of reducing avoidable suffering? It is the secret of the future. But, optimistic or pessimistic in this respect, the anarchist individualist will not the less continue to denounce the prejudice which gives statist authority its force: the superstition of necessary government, and to live as though the prejudice and this superstition did not exist.

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Émile Armand
The Anarchism of Émile Armand
1907–1964

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The Great Debacle

Émile Armand

(March 1915)

I am asked to write an article for Mother Earth for its tenth anniversary. I do it gladly, for since it first appeared I have followed its career with a lively interest. I do not write this as a compliment, such as one makes a person one wishes to please. The proof of my interest in Mother Earth is shown by the articles and extracts I have translated and published from it. I have before me, at this moment, a collection of the most recent numbers of the French publications which I have been editing the past fifteen years. I need only glance through them to find these articles. Here, taken at hazard, are “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation,” by Emma Goldman; “The Dominant Idea,” by Voltarine de Cleyre — two remarkable essays; “Tendencies of Modern Literature,” by Zuckerman; “The Story of Annie,” by Elizabeth Boole; a study of “Moses Harmon,” by James F. Morton; another on “Manuel Pardinás,” by Pedro Esteve. Then again I find a “Proclamation,” by W. Curtis Swabey, and a poem, “The Revolt of the Ragged,” by Adolf Wolff. I pass by, I need hardly mention, numerous quotations, etc., I have made. I believe this is eloquent testimony to my interest in Mother Earth.

I confess that I would like to write at greater length, and put more of joy into this contribution. I know the struggles and difficulties and opposition that a publication like Mother Earth encounters. To have resisted and existed so long in a country like the United States is a victory to be acclaimed by songs of triumph. But my mind is too preoccupied and my heart too torn to express the joy this anniversary calls forth. One subject only haunts me and torments me: the unquestionable bankruptcy of the movement of advanced ideas in our old Europe.

I do not belong either to the Socialists, or the Anarchist Communists, and their attitude did not surprise me very much. I have already seen too many turncoats and apostates. And the Individualists are not exempt. Still I confess that my imagination did not come up to the reality.

I ask myself if I am not dreaming when I see this Revolutionist abandoning the class struggle for the time being to assist in the national defense; and that Anarchist, as a diplomat emissary to neutral States, to put before them a scheme that will precipitate a gigantic conflict between millions of men. On the billboard opposite is an official poster, on which appears the names of high ecclesiastical dignitaries, the most reactionary men in the public eye, fused with the most ardent of the Socialist Deputies and the most popular leaders of Syndicalism. One need only read the letter of resignation of Pierre Monatte, of the Council of the *Confederation du Travail* to see whether I exaggerate.

I must say that the attitude of the intellectuals is not more encouraging. Among literary men, until now known as anti-nationalists; among scholars, renowned for their pacificism, one can count on one's fingers those who have protested against the war-fury let loose on Europe by the sinister International of War. Nearly all of them — the religious and the free thinkers, atheists and monks, those who incline toward the pen, and those who depend on speech — nearly all have joined the fighters. What a collapse!

I know well enough that revolutionists in neutral countries are writing and proclaiming the ideas of the old International of the workers, protesting against this stand of which I write, and are dreaming of revolution after the war. First of all, one may say, that it is not a great virtue to write like this in a neutral country, where one is quite sheltered, and one might ask what the attitude of the protestants would be if their country were drawn into the conflict. It is quite evident that those who favor the idea of insurrection ignore completely the state of mind of our opponents. One must be blind not to perceive that such a movement would have no chance of success. There exists a repression, worse perhaps, than that which crushed the Commune of 1871. It gives the governments an easy opportunity to impose silence — without a chance to reply — to the rare spirits who may have resisted in the first general disorder. It is on this handful of men that the mass of those who may escape from shot and sharpnel, excited by the paid press, will perhaps avenge themselves at the end of the war, for having been kept so long from home.

As it was impossible to prevent the massacre, and as it is impossible to stem it, much as we would, I believe that we ought to ask if we have not been deceiving ourselves until now about the value of our propaganda, as well as the way we have gone about it.

And here I wish, in all sincerity, to give the results of my experiences and my reflections.

I believe that the anti-authoritarian propaganda is at present incapable of touching and profoundly rousing a great number of men. I think that a movement of the masses has no chance to make itself felt without being strongly organized, disciplined like the military. I think that, generally speaking, human beings can not get along with authority. I think, too, that without a strongly centralized organization, it will be impossible to alter our economic conditions.

I am absolutely convinced that only a small minority, a very small minority, among men, are seriously reached and profoundly moved by our propaganda of criticism, of doubt, of rebellion, of free investigation, of independent research.

On the other hand, it is clear that our first interest lies always in seeking to increase this minority; to keep it, under all circumstances alive, active, refreshed. Our own happiness depends on it.

But we will not be able to keep alive a vigorous spirit of revolt in this small minority, if we give our propaganda a purely negative tendency, a tendency frankly destructive. Too often we do not stop to inquire where their preconceived ideas have disappeared when we give them a social morality of "a future society," a mature economic system — all of which is more than remote. Too often we have wished "to reconstruct their minds, without waiting to see whether "the destruction" was complete. It is our greatest fault.

Many of those with whom we come in contact believe in extra-natural ideas, in abstract aspirations, in far off results, in joys, not based on the senses, many, who would not wish to make a clean sweep of notions of "rights" and "duties" against the State and Society in all its domains (social, moral, intellectual, economic, etc). One must expect that the first crisis will leave them bewildered and ready to give up.

The free man says to himself: "No duty binds me to my fellowman or to my world that oppresses and exploits me, or maintains or contributes to that which oppresses and exploits me. Nothing more will I give to the man or the world that I despise. I do not give him or them any right to my person, my life or my production. Neither do I recognize that I have any right over the person, the life or the production of another. I reject all imposed solidarity, all forced fraternity, all coerced equality. I do not accept any association, except that which I freely choose and freely consent to, and reserve the right to break it off whenever I feel it may injure me." On the above must rest the existence of all enemies of authority. It is the *raison d'être* of their existence. It would be on this basis that theory and practice would really be efficacious, and this is how we must carry our anti-authoritarian propaganda to those who are interested.

Life is never a conserved phenomenon. It comprises, on the contrary, many phenomena essentially destructive. It is negation itself of fixity, it is a continuous selection, an incessant wear and tear. Everything annihilates and consumes itself. That is why a rebellion accomplished by individuals, without much idea of social reconstruction, comes much nearer being a vital action, it seems to me, than a revolution made by allied conspirators, of an organization with a well defined theory of communal happiness. The latter is altogether conservative; a governmental conception that must impose itself even on those who have no desire for communal happiness. This conception has nothing anti-authoritarian in it.

I am convinced that that only logical attitude that the enemy of authority and exploitation can adopt — practiced by one like the other — is an attitude of resistance, of objection and of opposition to all that threatens him — environment, institutions, individuals — that limit his development, and crush his personality. I think it is because the communist, revolutionist, or individualist propaganda neglected to insist on this essential attitude that we are the witnesses of the great debacle which is saddening all of us.

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Émile Armand
The Great Debacle
(March 1915)

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The Individual and Dictatorship

Émile Armand

1935

We know that the State can perpetuate everything it wants to, because it has behind itself the armed force. The Soviet-state doesn't in the least differentiate itself in this respect from the Fascist one, or from any other powerful dictatorial State. The differentiation lies only in the interests that they represent. Any kind of forceful dictatorship, any sort of a stringent built-up State can, when it wants to, attain the same results as Fascism and Bolshevism. It only needs to have sufficient power in its hands and create an appropriate atmosphere, in order to be enabled to suppress oppositional interests and strangle the protests of those who disagree with it.

In the development-history of human beings since the world war, there has taken place a great change, a complete upturn. Four years, four terrible continuous years the rulers had no consideration, have not at all had any consideration with the social unity — the individual. They didn't see in the human being anything else than dead material, stockades who were not able to move themselves without "marching routes" and military orders. A few people set in a central bureau and pushed the masses hither and thither as it suited them best, or as it was demanded by the interests that they represented. One had to obey, without a murmur, without a thought, not asking as to the purpose. This condition has left such deep traces in the average thinking, that one must ask himself as to whether it is not needed to divide the history in two periods; the period before and the period after the war.

Military dictatorships, political dictatorships financial dictatorships, social and moral dictatorships — for all this heap of sufferings and evils that spread themselves over the world, we have to thank the war. In Russia, for instance, the stabilizing of production and consumption is simply being decreed, not mattering as to whether it suits to the producer or consumer or not. In Italy, decrees are issued that force one to be "virtuous" and so on..

Where then remains the individual, the person, the "I," the social unity?

I know what will be answered to me on this. I know already the arguments of the Stalins, the Mussolini's and all of that kind." The State-citizen, subordinate, the administrative subject yes, but what then does he want? We are doing for him, for his well-being and security a great mass of things. Yes, we even make of him an atheist — or a religious person; we make, that his mind should work in the direction of communism — or fascism (just as it has been before proscribed to belong to an existing state religion); we make out of him a tiny wheel of the great mechanical mass production, as well as of the state mechanism — according to the demands of our interests. As a reciprocity for this mountain of deeds and good wills, that we do for him, we only ask a

very small considerate thing, and this is; to renounce his personality and completely give himself over into our hands.”

Herein lies the problem; does it pay to surrender our personality into the hands of dictators — for the “beneficial deeds” of a force-dictatorship with drums and trays and with flying flags?

If we were animals, herded together in a stockade, then the eating part would be the only real thing that would interest us, and it would not be so important as to whether the trough is colored Bolshevik-red or Fascist-black (taking it for granted that there is at all a trough), whether the food-distributor carries upon his cap a soviet-star or a fascist insignia or a swastika, the main thing would be the eating part.

But when one doesn't consider oneself as a stockade-animal, when one doesn't place the eating above one's determined, self-acknowledged, ever-developing personality and its traits, then the entire program changes.

There arise then different questions. For instance, as to whether the forced stabilizing of the production and of the consumption is as beneficial for the formation of this personality, where the production and the consumption through individual or various free, comradely unions; whether the hand-craft or a similar system is not better suited to build up the personality than the extreme mechanization and rationalization; whether a single dwelling place is not more suitable than a dwelling-armory; whether the shortening of the work time doesn't depend more upon the quality of the product, or from the disposition of some superfluous things, than the surpassing of the mechanical mass production; whether no kind of education at all wouldn't be better than such an education that has as its aim the implanting within the mind of the child a Bolshevistic or fascistic mysticism; whether public activities, as child-protection, the care of motherhood, etc. could not just as well be created through mutual associations of the participants (for example, union for transport, for travel, for correspondence-relationship and so on), than through the State?

It can very calmly be asserted, that as much as there have disappeared the superstitions as to the inequality among races and sexes, it was but a result of the culture-height of the individual, and that there has been no need for any kind of interference from the State; that the freedom of custom is a question of personal ethics, an expression of the personal conception and has nothing to do with the guarantee of the State.

Thus, whereas the outspoken dictatorships or the masked ones declare before the entire world that force is the healing method for all the evils in society, we say, that only free-willingness can develop strong personalities.

Our ideas and conception of life, which we represent only for ourselves, deserves just as much consideration, as the idea and life conception of those who force their ideas upon others, without their consent. We declare, that where there exists a force-reign of society, there is no free choice and in that event, due to the education as well as to the administrative and policing organizations, the results will be a humanity, a society, an equality of slaves.

The Soviet Union could have a very simple method to receive the sympathies of the anarchists. It would have to, within its domain, give the anarchists an opportunity in an uninterfering way to experiment their ideas, that means to give them the liberty of expressing and propagandizing their views, to unite themselves and carry through their aims.

If the Soviet Union should accept this, it would mean giving the opportunity, for free competition, for free choice, But the body of authority lies in that of not allowing such an opportunity. A dictatorship does not want, that it should be chosen, that it should be compared with another

regime, but has to be accepted. Whether one wants it or not. And one must not complain, nor speak out. There is no more despotic, oppressive system in the world.

There is no doubt that the economic as well as the for political mysticism of bolshevism and fascism there is marked the same fate as the Catholic mysticism. One nice day they will, as all former imperialistic formations, go down to perdition by the over measure of their dictatorship.

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Émile Armand
The Individual and Dictatorship
1935

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To Feel Alive

Émile Armand

1910

I. As I write these lines, election season is in full swing. The walls are plastered with posters of every color where people claim to be of every flag, every “color” of opinion. Who doesn’t have his party, his program, his profession of faith? Who is not either a socialist, a radical, a progressive, a liberal, or a “proportionalist” — the newest fad? This abnegation of the self is the great malady of the century. One belongs to an association, a union, a party; one shares the opinions, the convictions, the rule of conduct of another. One is led, a follower, a disciple, a slave, never oneself.

It’s true that this is less taxing. To belong to a party, adopting someone else’s program, adjusting to a collective line of conduct, is to avoid thinking, reflecting, creating one’s own ideas. It is to dispense with acting by oneself. It is the triumph of the famous theory of the “least effort,” for the love of which so many stupid things have been said and done.

Some call this living. It’s true: the mollusk lives, the invertebrate lives; the plagiarist, the copy-cat, the babbler all live; the lemming, the traitor, the slanderer and the gossip all live. Let us leave them and dream not only of living, but something more: “to feel alive.”

II. To feel alive is not only to be aware that we are regularly performing the functions that maintain the individual (and, if you like, the species). Nor is feeling alive to perform the acts of one’s life within a narrow design, in line with some wise book written by some author who knows nothing of life but its hallucinations, crucibles, and equations. To feel alive is certainly not to keep to neatly graveled paths in a public garden when the capricious trails of wild undergrowth are calling out to you. To feel alive is to vibrate, thrill, shudder with the perfume of flowers, the songs of birds, the crashing of the waves, the howling of the wind, the silence of solitude, the feverish voice of crowds. To feel alive is to be as sensible to the plaintive chant of the shepherd as to the harmonies of great operas, to the radiant influence of a poem as to the pleasures of love.

To feel alive is to render exciting those details of one’s life that are worth the trouble: to make of the latter a fleeting experiment, and of the first an experiment that succeeds. All of this with no constraints, with no program imposed in advance; according to one’s temperament, then, to one’s state of being in the moment, one’s conception of life.

III. One can think oneself an anarchist and vegetate. One can mirror the anarchism of one’s newspaper, one’s favorite writer, one’s group. One can call oneself original and deep down be nothing more than a second- or third-degree add-on or outsider.

Being bound by the yoke of a so-called “anarchist” morality is to be always tied down. All a priori moralities are the same: theocratic, bourgeois, collectivist or anarchist. Doubled over under a rule of conduct contrary to your judgment, reason, and experience, to what you feel and desire, on the pretext that it is the rule chosen by all the members of your group, is the act of a monk, not of an anarchist. It is not the act of a negator of authority to fear a loss of esteem or incurring the disapproval of your circle. All that your comrade can ask of you is not to encroach on the practice of his life; he cannot go farther.

IV. An essential condition for “feeling alive” is to know how to appreciate one’s life. Morals, sensations, rules of behavior, emotions, knowledges, faculties, opinions, passions, meaning, the brain, etc. — so many means that can allow us to approach our life. So many servants at the command of the “self” for it to develop and expand. Mastering them all, the conscious “negator of authority” does not allow himself to be mastered by any of them. When he succumbs, it is from lack of education of the will. This is not irreparable. The studied “one-beyond-domination” is not fearful; he enjoys everything, bites into everything, within the limits of individual appreciation. He tastes everything and nothing is repugnant to him, so long as he maintains his moral equilibrium.

Only the anarchist can feel himself living, for he is the unique one among men, the only one whose appreciation of life has its source in himself, without the impure inmixing of an authority imposed from without.

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Émile Armand
To Feel Alive
1910

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What We Have Been, We Still Remain

Émile Armand

September 1915

It is not from a vague humanitarian sensibility, nor from a hazy and mystic pity that we are proclaiming our horror of war. We know very well that life is a continual selection, in which only the most able and gifted triumph.

What causes our hatred for war, i. e., for the state of war and all that follows in its train, is that while it reigns self-assertion and individual determinism are more than ordinarily restrained, constrained, repressed, not to say reduced to naught. It substitutes in place of the individual struggle for existence and happiness a collective struggle profitable to a small number of the governing and the large exploiters of all countries. It places the individual in a humiliating position of subordination and dependence in face of the administrative and military authorities.

The non-combatant is deprived of the ability to express and expand his thoughts, if not also of free movement. His product is at the mercy of the first requisition. On the field of carnage, a prey of the atmosphere of brutishness and savagery, he is but an inanimate object, like a piece of baggage, at the disposal of others, who in their turn obey orders that they dare not discuss.

This was our standpoint before the actual events; such it still remains. We did not have to renounce our opinions, for they are confirmed. The most convincing proof that we had not erred is seen in the attitudes of the Collectivists, Syndicalists, Communists called Anarchists and others who suddenly turned into ardent defenders of civilizations and politics based upon maintaining mankind in subjection and ignorance; we have observed “adjustments of aim” which the tragic circumstances alone prevent us from qualifying as buffooneries. This sort of socialist recognized the necessity of temporarily abandoning the “class-struggle” to participate in the “national defense.” This ilk of Anarchist proposes to change neutral diplomats to terminate the gigantic struggle. The strangest medley of names are to be found in conjunction, the highest dignitaries of the church, the most accredited representatives of the conservative bourgeoisie, the flamboyant “fifteen thousand” Socialists and the Syndicalist divinities!

If they could not or would not oppose or halt the massacre it behooved Socialists of all persuasions, with the feeling of elementary shame, to hold their peace. The interval of silence would have furnished an occasion to meditate on the frailty of dogmas. The attitude of the “intellectuals” is no less disgusting. Anti-nationalists and pacifists, religionists and free-thinkers, atheists and monists, all, or nearly all, have kept pace with the government. Such a downfall!

If, comrades, we break the silence imposed by circumstances beyond our control it is not merely to deliver into space hollow recriminations. It is above all and essentially to *put you*

on guard against incitations emanating from persons boasting of conceptions of the old International, urging to insurrection or revolution *after the war* those of you who shall have survived the butchery.

Note, in the first place, that these doctrinaires write safely esconced in neutral countries where at this moment it is the interest of the governments to see a flourishing pacifist and anti-militarist propaganda. In the second place, what passes under our eyes obliges us to inquire what would have been the attitude of these theoreticians if the States in which they reside had been engulfed in the conflagration?

In reality, as before the war, we remain the resolute adversaries of revolutionary or insurrectionary attempts.

One must be blind not to perceive that a movement of this kind has no chance of success; it would result in a repression probably worse than that following the Commune of 1871; it would give the authorities an occasion to silence permanently those rare spirits who have known how to resist the general disorder. It is this handful of men that will be attacked by the mass escaped from bullets and shrapnel, urged on by the masters, exploiters and servile press, avenging their long absence from their firesides. Moreover, only one gesture can interest us — that which recoils directly and personally upon the guilty ones.

Doubtless, the war, no matter who triumphs, will produce numerous causes of discontent. They are already fermenting. These germs of dissatisfaction our propaganda ought to utilize.

But before passing this question it would be well to glance at the past. We must recognize that but too often we neglected to erase preconceived notions from the minds of those whom we wished to accept “future societies” or economic systems to come. Too often we had wanted to reconstruct ideas in brains before the complete demolition of the old. We have not criticized vehemently enough the enrollment in leagues, unions, syndicates and other bodies where individual autonomy and initiative are sacrificed to the common weal. Some of us have listened complacently to hypocritical justifications of “social constraints” or “solidarities” which are not disputed because their end is alleged to be the general or collective interest! The awakening was rude.

Even without decided advantage on either side, the simultaneous exhaustion of military and financial resources of the belligerents, the intervention of large capitalists, existing pressure upon the head of some neutral State, the inquietude of politicians fearing the electoral effect upon their parties, will hasten the end of the conflict.

The war concluded, it will be necessary for us to resume with vim and zeal the education of the individual. More than formerly and with all means at our disposal it devolves upon us to awaken the desire and will to annihilate all notions that enthrall men to the State, Society, institutions or men representing them.

In other words, according to the temperaments of those we encounter, making appeal to sentiment or reason, to interest or sensibility we must:

Denounce relentlessly the peril of what places the individual, voluntarily or forcibly, in solidarity with the social ensemble;

Demonstrate irrefutably the negation of super-personal ideals, belief in the invisible, abstract aspirations, happiness not subject to the senses;

Destroy radically belief in chiefs and leaders, parliaments and public unions, newspapers and workers' federations, exploiters and exploited;

See to it, in a word, without relaxation, that those to whom our propaganda is addressed are turned into irreconcilable enemies, theoretical and practical, of all domination and exploitation of man by man or by his environment.

Comrades, we are not calling you to insurrection or revolution on the “morrow of the war.” We know that no society is superior to the sum of those composing it, and if, by chance, a popular movement were successful, it would only effect a change of rulers. It is for a more profound task that you are to prepare henceforth, to sap and undermine all vestiges of respect for Society, State, rules, and rulers. We are so few in number that we cannot afford to have even a single one misled by the dialectics of the fossils of the International. Let us recollect that distrust and suspicion is on the increase for all those who wish to govern, direct, lead or conduct; that people are more and more inclined to think for themselves, to identify themselves with their own interest only, to lend a deaf ear to all except what is conducive of their own development. Moreover, they are opposed to the social usurpation of the individual.

Thus we can realize, for ourselves, the opportunity to live our own lives.

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Émile Armand
What We Have Been, We Still Remain
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